
P R E F A C E.

AS the author's design, in composing the following pages, was to enstruct, rather than to entertain, she entreats her readers not to expect extravagance of character, or variety of incident. Writing professedly for the inexperienced part of her own sex, she thought it more adviseable to describe life as they are likely to find it, than to adorn it with those gaudy and romantic colours in which it is commonly depicted. She wishes to convince them, that it is but seldom that they will be called forth to perform high acts of heroic excellence, but that they will be daily required to exert those humble duties and social virtues, wherein the chief
part

P R E F A C E.

part of our merit and our happiness consists.

Great and sudden reverses of fortune are not frequent; yet little disappointments hourly occur, which fall with the greatest severity on those, whose amiable, though dangerous enthusiasm, induces them to expect too much, and to feel too severely.

To counteract the evils incident to the romantic conclusions which youth are apt to form; to place the maternal character in a dignified and pleasing point of view, and to secure happiness, by removing those capricious desires which undermine content, is the chief design of the author. Conscious of many defects in the execution, she entreats all the indulgence which candour will allow.

20 JY 63

THE

ADVANTAGES

OF

EDUCATION.

CHAP. I.

CONSULTING a sensible friend upon my intended work, I read to her, as a specimen, the character of my heroine.

After a pause, "You say nothing," said Mentoria, "about her beauty and accomplishments."

VOL. I

B

"I did

"I did not think," replied I, "that a particular description of her personal attractions was necessary for those, who only read her life."

"You may put your manuscript in the fire," said my friend, "not a soul will read it; who do you think will be interested in the fate of a girl, whom they do not know to be handsome and elegant?"

I answered, "she shall be simple in her manners, gentle in her disposition, possessed of an improved mind, and a benevolent heart. Her fortitude shall be tried, her patience exercised, her humility,"——

"My dear Prudentia," interrupted Mentoria, laughing, "why you are describing the wife of Clericus, who starves upon a Welsh curacy. Does any one care for the distresses of merely good sort of people? Every body says, we are sorry for them, but the nerves of pity can never be affected, unless

less beauty, elegance, and refinement, constitute the character of the sufferers. Do not all novels turn upon this hinge?"

"I detest imitation," said I, "and besides it is my intention to explode those notions which novel reading in general produces, by delineating human life in false colours, expectations are formed which can never be realized; the consequence of which is, that life is begun in error, and ended in disappointment."

"Do not you intend then," said Mentoria, "to conduct your heroine through the severest trials, to wealth and felicity, and to reward her patience and humility by a faultless husband, and an immense fortune?"

"No," said I, pettishly, glowing with the spirit of female pride, "I do not chuse to hold up matrimony as the great desideratum of our sex; I wish them to look to the general esteem of worthy people, and the appro-

4 ADVANTAGES OF EDUCATION.

bation of their own hearts, for the recompense of their merit, rather than to the particular addresses of a lover. Men educate their youth upon this principle; they never say, "do thus, " and the ladies will admire you. Indeed, we ourselves should think such an inducement would only form a coxcomb, or a *petit maitre*; and can we expect any other, than that our method should produce a romantic prude, or a flirting coquette."

"Your intentions," replied my friend, "are as romantic as those which you design to eradicate; at least, if improbability of success constitutes the romantic. Your work will, I foresee, rest peaceably on the shelves of your bookseller, unless you condescend to bind it in gilt paper, and send it into the world with a little alteration of its title, and call it *The renowned History of Miss Williams*, who, by being a very good girl, gained the love of all her friends and acquaintance."

"Cannot

ADVANTAGES OF EDUCATION.

5

"Cannot then," said I, "nature and simplicity please beyond the age of twelve years; will no one be interested about Polly Williams, because," my friend at the name of Polly, laughed so immoderately, that in compliance to her taste (for she is a woman of the world) I have adopted the name of Maria, and have even consented to allow her beauty and elegance, lest I should not have one reader in her teens.

But as I have retained as much as possible of my original plan, I must premise that Maria's beauty was not of that striking kind, as can create universal envy in the women, and adoration in the men. In some of her accomplishments too, she may possibly have been equalled; and as to her husband, though not absolutely perfect, he will be, as the world goes, a decent character. In fine, I declare, with all the veracity of a faithful historian, I shall copy him from a gentleman who was once a lover of my own, and allowed by every body to be——

—“ A man, take him for all in all,

“ We ne’er shall look upon his like again.”

But before I close this chapter, I will in-
treat those readers, whom patience and cu-
riosity have induced to travel thus far with
me, to peruse once more my title page; and
if they are, although ever so trifling a period,
on the wrong side of sixteen, to resign me to
their younger sisters, for I am confident, that
if they proceed, they will only find me a
contradictious and stupid companion.

CHAP. II.

SO much more agreeable is it to detect
the faults of others, than to exhibit our
own, that I might have proceeded in the de-
sultory style for several pages; but having
recollected, that by trifling, I should set my
pupils

pupils an example of as great an enormity as those which I attempt to correct, I will, without further delay, introduce to their acquaintance, Maria Williams, an amiable unaffected girl, who, to all the enthusiasm of youthful innocence, united all its impetuosity and inexperience.

She had been separated from her father at too early a period, to retain the least recollection of him. Of her mother, who had left England about nine years, she had little more than a personal remembrance.

Pecuniary distresses had compelled her parents to quit their country; and as Mrs. Williams constantly hoped the period of her banishment would speedily terminate, she felt unwilling to expose her only child to the danger of the sea, or the unhealthy climate of the new world. Sacrificing her own feelings to her daughter's safety, she contented herself with the consciousness of having discharged

her duty, and left her future reward to Providence.

A relation of Mr. Williams, afforded an asylum to Maria, during the two first years of her mother's absence, but dying without having performed the promise which she had given, of providing for the child, Maria was placed at a boarding school in ———shire. As her governess, Madame Du Pont, supplied to her all those attentions, which children more happily circumstanced, receive from their parents; the friendless girl naturally looked up to her with all the affection which gratitude inspires for those, from whom we receive protection and support.

As she recollected little of her parents, she must inevitably have drawn their characters from the descriptions of those with whom she conversed. She remembered that her relation, Mrs. Arbuthnot, always told her, that her mother was a very severe and obstinate

ADVANTAGES OF EDUCATION.

nate woman, and who, upon all occasions, would have her own way,

Young as she was, Maria discovered, that Mrs. Arbuthnot was no ways deficient in obstinacy herself; and with respect to severity, as it was a family rule that she should be corrected every day, she considered it an event of course, and did not regard it. Her only wonder was, that she was whipped one day for what she was caressed the next. She however always knew that the old lady meant well, and was her friend; and as Madame du Pont constantly taught her to expect very different treatment, when she returned to her mother, from what she had experienced at school, she never presumed to call Mrs. Arbuthnot's sagacity into question. As to her father, it was universally agreed, that he was a great villain, but particulars were never enlarged upon.

Maria corresponded with her mother. The letters passing under the eye of the
B 5 governess,

governess, soon, on the daughter's side, degenerated into mere matter of form. The common place account of her masters, the number of boarders, what young lady took her home at the holidays, &c. &c. gave little insight into her character. Mrs. Williams rejoiced that Maria was well, and waited for clearer information till a happier period.

At length Mrs. Du Pont received a letter with a black signet, in which Mrs. Williams entreated her cautiously to inform her daughter of her father's death. She added, that as soon as she had settled her affairs, which she hoped a few months would effect, she should return to England. Enclosed was a draft for fifty pounds, which she requested might be appropriated to the purchase of mourning for Maria, whom she desired might, till her return, be raised to the situation of a parlour boarder.

The

The governess, who had a little tincture of the marvellous, and a high opinion of her own penetration, fancied the style of Mrs. Williams's letter was more consequential than usual, and being accustomed to annex great wealth to the idea of a Creolian, soon found, even in the form and seal of this epistle, convincing reasons for elevating Maria into a rich heiress. She did not indeed directly tell her that she was so, but it was soon whispered through the school, and the change in the behaviour of every one was astonishing. The masters took redoubled pains to render her perfect in their respective departments. The girls looked up to her as their umpire. She was introduced to all the company that came to the school, as the most accomplished pupil in the seminary; and nobody would be so destitute of taste as not to discern her beautiful features, her graceful air, and her fine form. The misses were continually interrogating her,

“What carriage will your mamma keep? where will her country house be? will she have a servant out of livery? shall you have more than six new dresses a year? do you intend going to all the race balls?”

Maria could not always tell how to answer these questions. Alternately the object of envy and admiration, it was impossible for her not to adopt some ideas of self-importance. She had heard of such things as beaux and lovers, and she knew them to be appendages on beauty and fortune.

In the midst of a very agreeable reverie, she heard the sound of a chaise, and a moment after she was hastily informed by one of the teachers, that her mother was that moment waiting for her in the parlour.

C H A P. III.

MARIA was suddenly overwhelmed by sensations which she had never experienced; and though anxious to see the person with whom she was to spend her future life, yet she very much dreaded her resentment, for till within these few months, she was reputed so incorrigible a dunce; that, as Mrs. Du Pont had a presentiment that she would never improve, she forebore the useless task of instruction, and remitted to her mother a punctual account of all her little errors and defects. Maria at first sprang eagerly forward to see her parent; then terrified and trembling, she caught hold of her conductor's arm, dreading, yet wishing to meet

meet the eye of one who was to be the arbiter of her fate. The door was opened, and the first object she beheld, was her mother lifeless in the arms of her governess. Mrs. Williams's eagerness to see her child, was become agonizing, and she fainted at the moment she was told she should instantly behold her.

Maria had not time to reflect upon this fine trait of maternal tenderness; she rushed to embrace and support her, and bathing her face with tears, earnestly conjured her to look upon her; no restorative could be so reanimating to Mrs. Williams, as her daughter's voice; she opened her eyes and gazed upon the lovely girl, in filial tears more lovely. Delighted with the pleasing object, she looked up to heaven with pious gratitude, and alternately with exstasy and tenderness on Maria.

Madame Du Pont, who was by no means deficient in the characteristic garrulity of her
4 nation,

nation, had too great an aversion to silence, to suffer a long vacuum in discourse.

Whilst Mrs. Williams and her daughter were conversing with their eyes, she was delivering a very copious harangue on the merits of the latter. She threw in indeed a little about her own merit, but that was only by way of inuendo. The chief of her discourse was referred to Maria's good sense, sweet temper, diligence, and gentility. She would not for the world have forgotten the last; and as her pupil's form was unusually graceful, she thought her mother would more readily give her credit for the rest.

Mrs. Williams at last complained of fatigue, said she had not been in bed the three preceding nights, and requested permission of the governess to stay a few days to recruit her health and spirits, which, by her late exertions, had been considerably injured.

Such

Such a request, from a lady of Mrs. Williams's consequence, was highly flattering. A great number of compliments fell from the voluble French woman; whilst her guest hastily swallowed a cup of coffee, and declining any other attendant than her daughter, retired to her apartment.

When secure from interruption, Mrs. Williams again eagerly pressed Maria to her breast. No longer restrained by impertinent observation, she breathed those pious ejaculations which maternal tenderness and devotion alike inspired. She thanked Providence for having restored to her the beloved girl, from whom she had been so painfully separated. But as I do not mean to describe minutely every circumstance of this affecting interview, I will only observe, that in this instance, as in all the events of life, pain was mingled with enjoyment. Though Mrs. Williams was charmed with her daughter's aspect, yet she feared that nature had proved less liberal to her mind: and Maria had

too much diffidence and timidity to suppress the apprehension, that her mother's transport and affection would abate, on a more intimate acquaintance.

The next morning was destined by Madame Du Pont, for the exhibition of her pupils; I should speak more precisely, if I said, for a display of her own merit. Mrs. Williams was compelled to be present at the examination of every genius in the seminary, in all their excellencies. She was forced to listen to a detail of the various methods by which this incomparable governess discovered their respective tastes. But Madame perceiving, that the repetition did not interest so deeply as she had intended; for the support of the flagging conversation, she had at length recourse to the eulionec flattery. Never was there any one to compare to the sweet Miss Williams, in every respect so equally adroit and diligent! Mrs. Williams interrupted her by complaining of sudden faintness, said the air would be her only remedy, and seizing her

her daughter's arm, hurried with her into the garden.

Having once more escaped from disgusting panegyrics, she looked steadily upon Maria for some moments; 'till perceiving that her serious air embarrassed the timid girl, she struggled to assume her former placid aspect. Having commended the fragrance and luxuriance of the woodbines which covered the arbour at the end of the terrace, she proposed that they should rest a little under that agreeable retreat. She now attempted to promote an easy conversation; and as she knew that there are circumstances, in which to talk of common place subjects, is both distressing and evidently affected; she told Maria, that having been so long incapacitated from ministering to her wants and desires, she hoped in future to enjoy, in its greatest degree, the purest felicity which a parent could taste, in promoting the happiness of her offspring.

“ I have

"I have been so unfortunate, my dear," said she, "as to lose all those connexions which would have endeared to me any particular spot of earth. You probably may have some preference, and in any part of England of which you approve, I will willingly fix our future residence."

Maria, encouraged by her mother's goodness, asked her "if she meant to reside all the year in the country."

"My health," resumed the good lady, smiling, "will not allow me to think of living in London; and I have so deeply felt the misery of a wandering life, that I place most of my ideas of happiness in a settled abode."

Maria felt a little hurt to give up the gaieties of the metropolis; but recollecting herself, soon answered, that as her mother kindly allowed her a choice, she must name Everdon, a delightful village, and the residence of her dear friend, Charlotte Raby,
who

who about two years ago left school to be her father's house-keeper, after Mrs. Raby's death. She feared however, it was such a little rural place, that her mother could not find in it a suitable habitation.

“ To gratify you, Maria, I will submit to some inconveniencies,” said Mrs. Williams. The conversation now stagnated; Maria expected, that having settled their place of abode, the carriage would be next discussed. On this head she would have been no contemptible adviser, as she had attentively watched all that came to her governess's for the last six months, in order to ascertain the most fashionable colour, and form; but as her mother said nothing upon the subject, Maria thought it might have been already ordered, and fearing to be impertinent, was silent.

It happened that at that moment Mrs. Williams was not thinking of her equipage or retinue. She was anxiously endeavouring
to

to gain a farther insight into her daughter's character; and at length asked her, with what young ladies at school she was particularly intimate.

This question opened an extensive field. My readers must have already discovered, that Maria herself was a most extraordinary girl, and will not wonder to hear, that all her friends were paragons. Delighted with the subject, she expatiated largely on the merits of each: they were good tempered, kind, and generous in the extreme, in short, the prototypes of Charlotte Raby, who still, amidst these tutelary goddesses, preserved the place of chief divinity. Candid and placable in her disposition, she would not have mentioned a word of her enemies, but then the merits of her friends could not have been rendered so conspicuous. She began (at first reluctantly) to name those girls who had used her intimates unhandfomely; 'till heated by the subject, she went on to delineate portraits, which, if they were not somewhat caricatured

caricatured by the bold strokes of a pencil that had not yet acquired precision, were such redoubted originals, as the world rarely produces, and I profess to exhibit only common and unexaggerated characters.

The little seminary within doors, were by this time dismissed, to enjoy their morning relaxation: and Mrs. Williams, who saw them approach, after tenderly thanking Maria for relieving her head-ach by her sprightly sallies, told her, that as she would soon be separated from her friends, she would not entirely engross her conversation, but wished her to join them in their amusements. Maria flew to them in high spirits, delighted at the extraordinary marks of penetration which she had exhibited to her mother, who walked pensively toward the house, reflecting on what had passed.

“ Her manner,” said she, “ is frank and ingenuous; her look animated and intelligent; a noble structure may be built upon
fo

so fair a foundation. Gracious heaven! give me strength and firmness properly to discharge my important duty. Make me grateful for all the good which I have discovered; and when any latent error appears, enable me to counter-act its pernicious effects, by mild, but persevering fortitude. A tear stole down her face, as she concluded this ejaculation. Accustomed to make no parade of feeling, she carefully obliterated every trace of concern before she entered the dining-room.

C H A P. IV.

DETERMINED to gratify her daughter, Mrs. Williams was musing upon the possibility of fixing at Everdon; and having

ing hinted her desire speedily to meet with an house, Madame Du Pont began a long description of all the sumptuous chateaus, palaces, and villas which she had visited, some of which she affirmed were now actually unoccupied.

Mrs. Williams asked her if she knew Everdon. The governess replied, "it was a sweet sequestered spot, but immensely dull in winter : besides, there was no house vacant in it but a little snug box, that Mrs. Williams could not possibly think of."

That lady however begged a description of this box ; and when she found that it contained two small parlours, a kitchen, and other correspondent apartments, a garden, and close, prettily diversified with flowering shrubs, to the astonishment of the whole company, she declared it was exactly what she wished for ; and finding that was not far distant, she determined to take a ride that afternoon, to fix upon the terms of entrance.

Mrs. Du Pont was all amazement, and secretly all indignation too, at the meanness of the West-Indian lady. She exulted indeed at the thought, that the lessons on elegance and appearance, which she had given to her pupil, would somewhat counteract the mother's sordid propensity. Respect for riches, a doctrine which she not only taught, but practised, prevented her from indulging even a look of disapprobation, in the presence of Mrs. Williams. But no sooner had that lady and her daughter stepped into the post-chaise that was to conduct them to Everdon, than by the keenness of her satirical observations, she made ample amends for the silence which politeness had enjoined.

The etiquette necessary to entering upon a house, not being very interesting, my readers probably will forgive a chasm, and will suppose that Mrs. Williams has purchased her furniture, hired her servants, and fixed herself and daughter in her little habitation. I must however observe, that the

avaricious humour which Madame Du Pont had discovered, was but too sensible in all those transactions. The furniture deserved no better name than neat and simple, and the family establishment was so shamefully deficient, as to consist only of one female servant and a foot boy. Indeed, besides having defrayed the school bill to the utmost, she had sufficient spirit to make the governess a present, as a mark of gratitude for her care of Maria; yet circumstances only denominated generosity. What Mrs. Williams gave, would have been called genteel, from a person of confined fortune, but it was thought pitiful, when annexed to the idea of a rich planter's widow.

There is a species of self ignorance, which greatly accelerates our comfortable progress through life. All the neighbourhood exclaimed against Mrs. Williams's parsimony; while she satisfied and contented, never suspected herself to be guilty of such an enormity. This may perhaps prove how little

we know ourselves: but I only design it to shew how little we can guess what will be said of us by others.

Maria, though somewhat chagrined at moving in a sphere so much humbler than what was expected, in a few days overcame a mortification, which seldom entirely depresses the sanguine hopes incident to health and youth. She applied herself with great assiduity to make every improvement to her mother's habitation; and made a plantation of roses, which was terminated by two stands for exotics, around which she determined to wind a profusion of eglantine and jessamine. She was happy to find that the shrubs that bounded the winding walk in the close, would readily admit of being disposed into an arbour at the end, which would derive an additional charm, from being contiguous to Mr. Raby's pleasure grounds. Charlotte assisted her in these undertakings, and also in composing little simple frames for her drawings and embroidery, which were to be hung up

C 2

in

in the best parlour. The decorations of the common room were still less artificial, and consisted only of pots and baskets, which Maria promised even in winter to ornament with flowers, of which she intended to cultivate a profusion. Though some circumstances of her education had exposed her to the danger of vanity and affectation, she yet retained that sweetness and ingenuity, of which nature had, at her birth, been uncommonly liberal.

C H A P. V.

I Have been prevented from proceeding in my narrative, from a fear, that if these pages should ever fall into the hands of people,

people, who are fond of drawing general conclusions, they may, from misapprehension, conceive, that I mean to fix an implied stigma on a boarding-school education: and as I really think too highly of the importance of education in general, to wish to bring any species of it into contempt, I judged it necessary to subjoin an explanatory digression.

It is true, that ever since those perplexities, which the connexion between my niece, Elizabeth and Lady —, occasioned (and which my brother has described very feelingly in a work, called the Mirror) my family dislike to fine people and fine things, has been greatly aggravated. I cannot but lament, that amidst the innumerable edifices appropriated to the reception of young ladies, the poor young women are never thought of. Mentoria tells me, that it is impossible to instruct non-entities, for the order of beings which I speak of, has been for some time extinct. As she allows, however, that they have been useful, she does not disapprove of

my earnest endeavours to attempt their revival.

One of the methods which I advise for this purpose, is, that all governesses should hold forth moral and intellectual qualities, as the object of their pupil's ambition. Let the girl who has given the most unequivocal proofs of candour, modesty, gentleness, and benevolence, be considered as an example, by which all her associates should regulate their conduct, in preference to one, who copies a drawing with the greatest nicety, or executes a tune with superior taste.

I am not a declared enemy to all personal accomplishments; on the contrary, out of my little stipend, I paid for half a year's instruction for my brother's two youngest daughters, who learnt of the best itinerant dancing master which our country produced: for I wished that the girls should know how to enter a room, and to go down the Highland Laddie, and the Banks of Enderney, with

with tolerable ease, and gracefulness; but, when Elizabeth insisted that the minuet de-la-cour, and the cotillion should be added to their attainments, a regard to consistency compelled me to stop.

Goodness of heart, regularity of temper, and propriety of conduct, are as equally necessary for the daughters of a mechanic, as for those of an Earl: but Kitty Spicer will be excusable, if Lady Bab Lardoan speaks French in a juster accent, and paints more naturally. Accomplishments like these, are the children of leisure; and there is no harm if Kitty's manner bespeaks the woman of business.

Elegant dress too, seems originally designed for the higher orders of life. A love of it is so congenial to the female heart, that it appears to be the duty of all instructors, to moderate this strong propensity. The conduct of schools in general, adds fuel to this irregular fire; and a child who has the misfor-

tune to be ill-dressed, must submit to neglect and ridicule. In this I will allow, that parents are often reprehensible; and unless a kind of sumptuary law could be introduced, school mistresses can do no more than act as moderators.

The dispute concerning private and public instruction, has been long kept up; and there seems to be some difficulty in deciding to which must be given the preference. I allow that many great advantages are annexed to the former; local prejudices are removed, habits of industry inculcated, and a spirit of emulation excited. I confess too, that many mothers are not possessed of sufficient information or leisure, to become the preceptors of their children; but I fear that few of those who, from a sense of their own inability, resolve to give their girls, what they call a good education, find their satisfaction proportionate to their expectations. Is not awkwardness held out as a chief object of ridicule? are these young satirists taught to distinguish between

tween the neglect, and the want of opportunity for improvement? are they early assured, that the knowledge which they are to gain, is but superficial, and calculated rather to enliven their leisure hours, than to form their chief employments? I fear the negative is the just answer; they must therefore return pert and conceited, and too often inclined to despise the parents, to whose injudicious, but well-meant liberality, they owe their fancied consequence.

As an old maid, I may be allowed to be singular and positive; and I know that it will only be charged to the account of family predilection, if I affirm, that though the home-spuns are now out of fashion, I do not think their successors are more worthy of public attention. These, fair goddesses, so fair, so blithe, so smooth, so gay, instructed only to dance,

“To dress, to troll the tongue, and roll the eye.”

Are by Milton affirmed to be destitute of all good, wherein consists

“ Woman’s domestic honour, and chief praise.”

Suppose for one instant that the rage for idleness (I beg pardon, I mean refinement ; I always mistake those words) should spread to the next order in society, and our housemaids and cooks, weary of their dirty occupations, should grow as refined as their young ladies. The industrious mother cannot perform all the domestic affairs herself ; and as we do not live in Utopia, but in a country, where exertion must precede enjoyment, our elegant girls must either be useful or starve. This apprehension is indeed needless ; real evils in abundance exist, to stem the torrent of refined whimsies, and sentimental extravagance. Our fine ladies bequeath ruined fortunes and domestic anguish to their relations ; but they reserve lassitude, self-reproach, and spleen for their own bosoms.

I shall

I shall have many sensible people on my side, if I affirm that this inundation of affected fashion, which sweeps away before it distinction and œconomy, may be attributed to the prevalence of a boarding-school education. This error is in part, I allow, interwoven with their institution; but a sensible governess may greatly remedy this defect. Much attention must be bestowed on those accomplishments, of which a superficial observer can easily judge. Interest compels them to this; but let conscientious duty equally compel them, to guard their little seminary, as much as possible, from those errors which will poison their future life. This, I own, requires superior care, and superior abilities; yet let me ask, ought young people to be intrusted to persons incapable of such exertions? a worthy and judicious instructor of youth, is certainly a first character. Education is an extensive field; and to introduce into it ornamental plants, without injuring its regular and agreeable verdure, requires a correct taste, and a skilful hand.

C H A P. VI.

TO resume the narrative. The affection of Mrs. Williams for Maria was too elevated to partake of that ridiculous partiality, which would have rendered her blind to her child's imperfections. She clearly saw that, like a rich neglected garden, her daughter's uncultivated mind ran into disorder and irregularity, through redundancy; but she too well knew the extreme nicety of giving advice with propriety, to hazard any exertion of maternal authority, till secure that the filial deference would be founded on affection.

By

By confidence, cheerfulness, and apparent satisfaction, she endeavoured to recall a sentiment which absence had effaced. It is true, that had she directed Maria's choice, Charlotte Raby would not have been the first person whom she would have selected for her friend. Vivacity, and a desire of being admired, were the chief characteristics of that young lady. As they both rose to extravagance, they often unavoidably plunged her into unpleasant situations; but as she was too volatile to act upon system, nobody conceived that she designed to do wrong. Frequent repetitions of error, however, compelled her justifying friends, to have recourse to the jejune exages, that it was her way, that she was very young, but would in time know better.

Her father, after having spent the prime of life in a respectable line of business, had retired, at the age of sixty, to taste rural pleasures with a large fortune, and a vacant mind. As he had never heard of the sylvian
6 deities,

deities, he could not be expected to sacrifice at their altar : but continued his adoration to his favourite divinities, the gods of good cheer, and convivial hospitality.

As his ideas of happiness consisted in living in a crowd, and acquiring the notice of his superiors, he never felt it in so superlative a degree, as when surrounded by the neighbouring gentry ; and when they found that his wine was excellent, his larder plentifully supplied, and his dinners well dressed, they were so affable as to make him frequent visits, and very condescendingly laughed at his city taste, and Change-Alley politeness.

The sprightly and eccentric Charlotte too, was no small allurements to the young fox-hunters in that vicinity ; and she was equally fortunate in affording entertainment to their mothers and sisters, by supplying a copious subject for declamation.

Miss

Miss Raby tenderly loved Maria, and pitied the dull sameness of her friend's life. To diversify it as much as was in her power, she invited her and her mother to all their parties. These civilities Mrs. Williams declined, as often as politeness rendered it possible, and prevailed on the young people to confine their interchange of sentiments to their morning walks, except the Rabys had by chance a disengaged afternoon, when, to avoid the vacuity at home, they dedicated it to Mrs. Williams. That affectionate but uncommon mother, instead of forming genteel connexions for her daughter, enquiring after the most fashionable artists who presided over the different branches of female dress, and performing all the etiquette which is commonly called introducing a young woman into the world, was assiduously employed in instructing her charge, to perform her part in it with consistency and comfort. Perceiving that her knowledge was confined, she endeavoured, by every agreeable artifice, to familiarize to her mind, several branches of learning,

learning, fearful, lest the austerity of science should discourage a beginner. History being most adapted to her purpose, she frequently, in the course of easy conversation, amused her daughter with some interesting narrative. They were not indeed so marvellous, or so much addressed to the passions, as the stories which Maria was accustomed to read; but they bore the stamp of truth, were related in an agreeable manner, and enlivened by remarks judiciously adapted to her taste and understanding.

The Grecian and Roman empires furnished various narratives, in which the force of patriotism, the firmness of virtue, and the astonishing greatness to which independence and integrity elevate the human mind, are exemplified. From the story of eastern nations, and the luxurious effeminacy that marked the declining days of Rome, she endeavoured to inspire the attentive girl with an abhorrence of extravagance, corruption, and licentious pleasure.

In the annals of our own nation, she taught her to observe the gradual developement of the mental powers, and to trace with nice discernment, the varying manners of her countrymen, from the rude Briton to the haughty Baron, and from thence to the elegant politeness of the present age. By specifying the virtues of each description of men, Maria was led to admire the patience and courage of the untutored savage, the hospitality and spirit of the feudal tyrant, the mistaken piety and mortification of the Monk, and the steadfast firmness of our first reformers. Religious principles too were strengthened by these discussions; as the narrator would frequently remark the visible interpositions of Providence, and the wonderful and seemingly impossible means, by which its great designs were accelerated. Nor did she forget (indeed it was her constant inference) to trace the improvement which morality received from the progress and clearer explanation of Christianity. Maria eagerly begged she might peruse the volumes from whence

whence her mother had derived such copious information; and thus, at the sweet girl's desire, the evenings of the first winter they passed at Everdon, were dedicated to historical researches.

The day indeed was fully employed. It began with devotion. Some slight exercises in French and drawing; the arrangement and execution of domestic affairs, the needle and conversation occupied the time; 'till a walk with Miss Raby, or gardening, if the weather permitted, filled up the space 'till dinner. The afternoon generally commenced with music; but as variety was one of Mrs. Williams's aims, nothing was absolutely fixed, except that working and reading were to occupy the evening.

One day Mrs. Williams was concerned to see her daughter return from her morning walk, with great perplexity and apprehension in her countenance. She was prevented from enquiring the cause, by Miss Raby's eagerly

eagerly telling her, that the officers of the — regiment, who were quartered in that neighbourhood, had politely resolved, in return for the many civilities they had received from the surrounding gentry, to give a public masked ball. Tickets had been given to her, and she was determined that her dear Maria should partake of the pleasure, if Mrs. Williams had no objection.

Anxiety and alarm were strongly depicted in Maria's face. Her mother made several excuses: as she had not been amongst the number of those who invited the officers, her daughter seemed to have no right to the festivity. This was soon answered by the lively orator. Her sweet friend's company must be acceptable. Mrs. Williams then pleaded, that as the party would consist of the first people of the county, none of whom had visited her, Maria might be thought intrusive, and ambitious of society above her situation.

Miss

Miss Raby exclaimed, "that every body who had seen the dear girl, admired her, and she was certain that she would meet with a most cordial reception; besides, her Chaperon, a lady of high rank, had offered to extend her protection to Maria."

Again the mother said, "that as a peculiar dress would be necessary, she thought such a preparation, for only one night, would in her circumstances be extravagant."

Charlotte, who had all the liberality which young people, whose wealth exceeds their wants, intuitively possess, immediately offered her purse and wardrobe.

Driven from every resource, Mrs. Williams was forced to beg that she would urge her no more on a subject, upon which she was absolutely determined. Miss Raby coloured with indignation, and hastily wished her a good morning, while Maria, washed in tears, retired to her own apartment.

C H A P. VII.

THE stony heart of Mrs. Williams was not melted by tears, or terrified by menacing looks. She allowed her daughter to indulge her grief in solitude, 'till dinner was announced; and then sent up stairs to desire her company.

Maria appeared; her eyes swollen, her face pale, her bosom heaving with smothered sighs. She sat down indeed to the table, but pleaded an intense head-ach, as a reason why she could not eat.

The

The mother was sorry for her illness, and recommended a little simple prescription, which she had known to be of great service; but as soon as the cloth was removed, and the servant withdrawn, she enquired of her daughter the cause of her uneasiness.

No question could be so embarrassing. Maria was certain her mother knew as well as herself, the motive of her tears; it was therefore very extraordinary for her to ask. She must answer—the difficulty was how; for the sorrows of people of Maria's age are frequently of that peculiar kind, that though they almost rive the heart that feels them, when they come to be described, they border more upon the ridiculous than the mournful.

She was forced to be a little disingenuous, and sobbing, answered, she was afraid Charlotte was offended.

Mrs. Williams was both surprised and concerned. She could not recollect that she
4 had

had given any cause; but added, "if you think I have, I will immediately write a conciliatory note. A friend so justly dear to my daughter, can never be unworthy my concessions. Fetch the pen and ink, my dear, however wrong I may have been, I trust Miss Raby's good sense and good temper, will readily excuse me."

Maria was so delighted at this unexpected panegyric on her friend, that she had proceeded to the harpsichord for the writing box, before she could recollect, that as her mother's style of refusing her friend's request had been perfectly polite; it was utterly impossible for any concession to be made on her side, unless, indeed, by giving up the point; and that, the character she had heard of her from Mrs. Arbuthnot, confirmed by her own observations, would not allow her to expect.

She considered too, that as Charlotte had rushed out of the room in a very angry manner, the offence seemed rather given by
her;

her; and fearing lest an apology might be construed into an oblique censure, she begged her mother would not write; for she said Raby was so thoroughly good-natured, that she knew ere this she had entirely forgot her, and forgiven all that had passed.

Mrs. Williams was glad Maria thought as she did of her friend's complacency; but asked, "if she was so sure of a speedy reconciliation, why she was so distressed?"

Compelled to acknowledge that her disappointment was the cause, she pleaded, as well as tears would allow, every peculiar hardship which attended it. She had never seen a masquerade in her life; this was expected to be extremely brilliant; it had been their constant conversation for some time; she had even fixed on her character—extreme distress prevented her from finishing the pathetic exculpation.

Mrs.

Mrs. Williams took her daughter's hand, and tenderly pressing it, asked, with a mild but penetrating look, if ever, since her return to England, she had, in any previous instance, exerted the maternal negative? Maria, with hesitation, answered, never.

“ Then surely, my child, I do not claim too much, in expecting that you will believe, that I would not have assumed this painful authority, unless impelled by reasons that are not only strong, but conclusive. I did not conceive there was a necessity for acquainting Miss Raby with every motive that influenced my decision; but as I wish for my daughter's confidence, I will conceal nothing from her.”

“ Maria, you have read many instances of the fascination of pleasure; but you are too inexperienced to know, that even amongst those to whom rank and fortune allow the frequent indulgence, not all the satiety and distaste that attends repeated enjoyments, are

found effectual to stop the desire of inordinate pursuit. To you these amusements will appear yet more irresistible, as they have the enchanting addition of novelty to recommend them, still more forcibly to your imagination. Hitherto you have been happy. Your garden, the employments of your pencil and needle, have furnished you with a succession of pleasures, all within your reach; and your newly acquired taste for reading, prevents even the hazard of your ever perceiving time to be an intolerable burden.

“ You are not ignorant, my dear girl, that balls and masquerades are diversions of which your situation in life does not allow a frequent repetition. I am anxious to keep you ignorant of pleasures, which it is not in my power to procure. Suppose I had yielded to your present wish, what security can you give, that after having once experienced the wild throb of tumultuary transport, you will preserve your relish for those calm delights which at present afford you so pure

pure a satisfaction? I know you, Maria, to be void of self-conceit; nor can I believe that you will attribute to yourself a share of forbearance and equanimity beyond your years."

Convinced, by her mother's arguments, Maria acquiesced, and endeavoured to resume her wonted cheerfulness of aspect. The effort was not unperceived; Mrs. Williams caught her to her bosom, and in a transport of maternal affection, proceeded in her harangue.

"I do not complain of the sufferings of my past life, since heaven affords me a prospect of serene and comfortable old age. For my hours of pain and watchful attention during your early infancy, and for the years of yet more agonizing mental suffering, while separated from my friendless girl, you promise richly to repay me. May you be happy, Maria, happy as my fond wishes can desire. Yet your highest felicity will fall short

of the transport which I shall feel, if it is in my power to promote or secure that happiness."

This tender scene was interrupted by the Raby's. Charlotte, conscious of error, was come to apologise; but being too much of the woman to give up the point, she had persuaded her indulgent father to accompany her, and exert his endeavours to meliorate the austerity of Mrs. Williams. She began the grand attack with apologies, and when she thought she had sufficiently softened the good lady by declarations of respect for her, and love for her daughter; Mr. Raby, who only waited 'till Charlotte's absolution was fully confirmed, threw in his assistance.

His harangue was too common to be curious. It began by declaring, that he had once been young, and yet remembered what young folks were. That old people should not contradict and thwart their children's desires, for if they did, how could they expect the young

young ones should love them. That for his part, he saw no harm in going to a ball, and he dared to say, that though they went in masks, there would be no mischief, for Lady Betty and Lady Sarah both went, and they were women of character. Charlotte, poor thing ! had vowed she should have no pleasure without Maria ; and if money was the prevention, he would gladly be at all the expence, to please the girls and make them happy.

The lady, to whom the discourse was addressed, did not in her reply attempt to controvert Mr. Raby's arguments. She only answered, that she had been talking to Maria on the subject, and was very willing that the affair should depend upon her decision. Charlotte kissed her hand in a transport, and declared that she should esteem herself forever bound to her by all the ties of gratitude and affection ; and there was nothing she would not gladly do to oblige her ; but upon turning to Maria to adjust some prelimi-

naries for their intended appearance, she was inconceivably astonished to hear her declare that she would not go. The negative was determined; nor had Miss Raby's rhetoric any power to alter it, or even to gain from her the reason of such a peremptory decision.

The disappointed young lady retired much mortified, and at parting declared, that if she had not promised Major Pierpoint that she would dance with him, she positively would not go.

Her companion, with some degree of pensiveness, took up the Roman History: the part intended for that evening's perusal, contained the story of Regulus. A vivid imagination soon sketched a resemblance between her own self-denying virtue, and that of the illustrious patriot. The idea was highly gratifying; she read of his invincible fortitude with increasing complacency, and fancying herself a heroine of ancient times, resolved with

with all the firmness of a Portia or a Lucretia, to smile in misery and triumph in suffering.

Elevated by these exalted ideas, she soon felt the calmness she at first only assumed. Her mind intensely occupied with other objects, was diverted from the recollection of her own distress. The records of the Williams family, (which to confess the truth, are somewhat minute) assure me that she actually slept that night with her usual tranquillity; that she visited her friend the next morning, whom she found surrounded by artists of every description, who displayed the various paraphernalia necessary for this important occasion; that she saw the bustle, and heard a circumstantial account of all the varieties of pleasure which Charlotte was going to partake, and then quiet and composed returned to her mother's. Even on the evening of the ball, she read with a firm voice her accustomed hour; and by some appropriate remarks, proved she was mistress of her attentive faculties. She wished her mother a

good night without any symptoms of repentment or ill humour, and the next morning, stimulated only by a pardonable curiosity, she set out to hear from her friend, an account of the felicity she had enjoyed.

Sorry I am, that the visage of Charlotte was not quite so animated and complacent as Maria's. She had a violent head-ach and was dying, to use her own words, with lassitude and fatigue. The narrative too, which she had to relate, was different to what was expected.

Her Chaperon, Lady Twaddle (now a person of great consequence, though originally constrained to move in a very humble sphere) had previously resolved that a masked ball out of London, must be an horrid bore; and knowing that she had power to render it disagreeable, politely determined to do all she could to spoil the pleasure, and improve the taste of all the young people in the neighbourhood. In the first place, concluding

cluding the entertainment would not begin 'till she came, she delayed setting out to the latest hour that was possible. Charlotte sat waiting in Lady Twaddle's dressing-room; but as her ladyship declared, that nobody thought of a ball in town 'till twelve o'clock, she was forced to say that she hated an earlier hour, and concealed the impatience which secretly fretted her heart. But as the rural gentry did not so exactly know the rule of etiquette prescribed by the preceding winter in London, they concluded some misfortune had befallen the poor Countess, and had unmasked and begun dancing before she and her party appeared. Miss Raby consequently lost the fun of finding out her acquaintance, and the pleasure of saying a number of smart things, which she had studied and applied to her character. She had indeed the honour of dancing with Sir Harry, one of her ladyship's cicerones; but as he danced ill, and took no notice of her, it was not a sufficient recompense for the pain she felt at seeing Major Pierpoint, with all the easy attention of

martial elegance, devoted to his partner Miss Mandeville, the declared enemy of Charlotte.

At supper more satisfaction seemed to be promised, as she sat near her chaperon, whose consequence was here indisputable. She had the pleasure of hearing all the smart witticisms, I should have said severe sarcasms, which her ladyship whispered against the entertainment and company; and to detail those, which did not immediately affect the parties she addressed, to the anxious listners that sat a little below. But in the midst of the exulting laugh which this amusement afforded, she detected Miss Mandeville in the very act of taking her off, and she thought the handsome young officer looked as if he enjoyed the mimicry. Miss Raby could proceed no further: she execrated balls, vowed she would never go to another, and burst into so violent a flood of tears, that Maria at once concerned and terrified, was alternately employed in applying hartshorn, and offering consolation.

consolation. At length, seeing her a little composed, she left her, to dress for some company which her father had invited to dinner, and returned home with a melancholy look, musing on her friend's unexampled disappointments.

C H A P. VIII.

MARIA'S intention of communicating the mournful tale, was suspended, when she saw that her mother's face was too much inclined to the tragical. She asked the cause, and finding it only proceeded from a visit she had made to a poor family, resumed her design. At first she did not pro-

pose to give Miss Raby's account in all its affecting circumstances, as she feared that in the present state of her mother's spirits, it might depress her too much : but finding it had not that effect, she gradually, as she proceeded, threw in more of the pathetic. Perceiving the impression still less lively than she had expected, she was at last forced to ask, if she ever knew any thing so unfortunate and distressing.

Mrs. Williams, instead of answering, began her narrative.

“ As soon as you left me this-morning, our chairwoman came to beg a little white wine for the children of Edwards, who you know died last night of the small-pox ; I seized this opportunity to enquire into the circumstances of the family, and was so concerned at what she told me, that I went to see if I could afford them any relief. The scene that I beheld, was truly deplorable ; the corpse of the father, covered with an old sack,

sack, was laid on the ground, in the least frequented corner of a miserable cottage. On a bed that mocks description, lay the eldest girl, to all appearance expiring with the same dreadful disease, and a boy recently seized with its symptoms; a truss of straw, then unoccupied, was, I found, the ^{nightly} residence of two half naked children, who were sufficiently recovered to crawl to the green wood that lay smothering in the chimney, and constituted what was called a fire. The mother of these unhappy creatures, feeble through fatigue, and emaciated by famine; with one arm held to her exhausted breast a little infant, and with the other, moistening the lips of her daughter with some warm water, poured through a broken tea pot."

Maria bitterly wept at the recital, and declared she could not think how human nature could support such affliction.

Mrs. Williams proceeded: "I sent for an apothecary, who humanely promised his assistance

ance gratuitously, and relieved part of the mother's distress, by saying there was a possibility of her eldest girl's recovery. I have ordered such things as seemed immediately necessary, but anxious to procure them a permanent relief, I represented their distress to the parish officers, who had refused them any assistance. The man had been dissolute and unworthy, and seemed, by idleness and insolence, to deserve affliction. Against the woman they alledge nothing, and her neighbours assure me, she has been humble and diligent. It was wrong (though it is what we are all apt to do) to transfer the resentment which the father deserved, to his unoffending family, who had been the principal sufferers by his crimes. I combatted this idea, and not without success; a nurse is ordered, and I have the satisfaction of knowing, that the unhappy creatures will not perish for want of future attention."

Maria was all indignation at the conduct of the overseers, and wished her mother had supported

supported the family herself, without appealing to such hard hearted people.

“ When ability is but small, my dear,” resumed Mrs. Williams, “ all who wish to be just before they are generous, should take care so to husband their little, that none may have cause to complain of partiality. Extreme distress has indeed a forcible claim; but superior merit seems to have an equal right to assistance. In my way home, I called on several others of my poor neighbours, and met with many objects, that forcibly moved my commiseration. I wish, although I know wishes are fruitless, that my ability was equal to the relief of all.

“ I was particularly interested at the behaviour of Nelly Waters, the young woman who lives nearly opposite; you know we have observed, that at whatever time we arose, or went to bed, we saw a light in that house, and heard her singing at her wheel. She labours, I am told, these extraordinary hours,

hours, to support a grandmother, who brought her up, and is now bed-ridden. The old woman dreads the idea of receiving subsistence from the parish; and the grateful girl has refused an offer of marriage from a young man whom she tenderly loved, that she might dedicate herself, during her grandmother's life, to the discharge of a double portion of labour, in order to support her. Her disappointed lover has enlisted in the army; she is poorly clad and fares hard, as the object of her attention is blind and decrepid, and consequently takes up much of her time in ministering to her infirmities; yet she has never been heard to complain. I admire her untaught virtue, her intuitive greatness of soul, and am impatient, by some little rewards, to encourage her perseverance in this heroic task."

"And cannot you, my dear mother?" said Maria, eagerly.

"In

“ In a small degree, my love, I can ; but I must add, if I had complied with all your wishes, I should have been deprived of this mental luxury. I have heard you talk of large houses, elegant furniture, and expensive pleasures, with admiration ; and you have once or twice urged me to exceed the sum I proposed, by saying that a trifle more would purchase something far more fashionable and genteel. I have previously calculated my expences, and have endeavoured to preserve order and proportion in every part, as nothing is to me so absurd, as a motley mixture of profusion and meanness.

“ If I had indulged your wishes, I must either have been confined in some other department, or trespassed on the sum which I appropriated to charity. Thus, my child, you see the necessity of my refusals.”

“ Are you sure,” said Maria, “ that you cannot afford to do more ? I have heard you say, that your income is as large as Mrs. Robson’s,

Robson's, and they live in a very different style?"

"Mrs. Robson," resumed Mrs. Williams, "has but lately commenced house-keeping. I have heard her say she hated accounts, and would never give herself the trouble of attending to perplexing calculations. The consequence of this inattention will not at present be felt; as her resources are known, her credit is good. A tradesman will not risque offending, by commencing dun, while he knows the capital of his creditor is equal to his demand upon it. But this protracted payment will in time be attended with alarming consequences; when it is once known to be the method of the customer, exorbitant charges will indemnify the shop-keeper for his long trust: the purchaser has not ready money to go to a fresh shop, and besides must fear to offend her creditors, and to bring upon herself claims, which she knows not how to answer. Ever whilst you live, Maria, dread an existence dependant upon
the

the lenity of others. Can your generous heart bear the thought, that it is owing to their forbearing from their legal rights, that you are permitted to indulge in grandeur and gaiety?

“ This is the epidemical folly, I must say vice, of the present age. Our nobility and gentry are seldom deficient in aristocratic pride; they affect to condemn the manufacturer and the mechanic, yet, at the same time actually revel on their property, and depend, for a continuation of splendor, on their forbearance or inattention. For my own part, I must confess I am too proud to endure such obligations; not even for the pleasure of placing all around me in ease and happiness, could I voluntarily submit to them.”

Maria, with a deep sigh, wished she had Charlotte's fortune.

“ I was going to propose a scheme,” said Mrs. Williams, “ which your friend's liberal

ral intentions towards you justifies. She offered her purse to contribute to your pleasures, and she shall contribute to those of the exalted and moral kind. Tell her what sorrow I have seen: I doubt not but she will wish to relieve them. You shall meet the benevolent design, and offer to be her almoner. While sickness and winter continue to afflict our poor neighbours, dedicate your time to their service; you shall buy suitable cloathing, and we will make it up. The little knowledge I have of medicine, will enable me, in cases not dangerous, to afford a safe, unexpensive relief. The ignorance of the poor is one of their chief misfortunes; we will visit, and endeavour to instruct those who would be ashamed of publicly receiving tuition: and we will try to support a little school, which will have the double advantage of informing children, and contributing to the support of some indigent old person, who can no longer labour to procure their own subsistence. It is incredible what essential services you may thus render your fellow
fellow

fellow creatures, and how almost miraculously multiply the widow's barrel of meal and cruise of oil."

Miss Williams, with alacrity accepted her mother's proposal; nor was the frank and open hearted Charlotte unwilling to give her assistance. She lamented exceedingly that she had not time to visit the poor herself; was shocked to hear that so much misery existed near her, which she knew nothing of, and giving her friend two guineas, promised a weekly donation while the present distress continued.

Maria assiduously entered on the active duties of social life. The garden, the pencil, the harpsichord, were all abandoned, even reading was neglected. One part of the day she was seen mixing a recipe, at another she was engaged in such culinary preparations as were proper for the sick; at one hour she visited her patients, and when she returned, cut out and made cloathing for those who were
not

not only poor, but ignorant and helpless. Her morning walk indeed was still continued; her mother insisted that she should keep an exact account of her expenditure, and that was the time Miss Raby heard the particulars of her stewardship. The gay Charlotte was so deeply interested in the narrative, that she often declared, if her heart was less tender, she would have shared with Maria the trouble of distribution; but time blunts the edge of novelty; and feeling, when it depends upon so frail a support, cannot be durable.

Besides Major Pierpoint had described to her the gaieties of Bath, the season for which had commenced; and her attention was now engrossed by contriving ways and means to prevail upon her father to go thither. To compass this point, was in fact no great difficulty. Mr. Raby was one of those lovers of ease, who cannot bear to have their tranquillity interrupted by real or imaginary distress. A journey of a hundred miles was a less

less inconvenience to him, than the importunities of his beloved daughter. —

Delighted with her success, Miss Raby flew to Jenny, her faithful Abigail, to consult upon what preparations would be necessary in the article of dress; and Mrs. Jenny, as an adept in her profession, wisely considering the value of cast offs, soon found that a very large addition to her mistress's wardrobe was indisputably necessary. The difficulty was, how to procure materials in a hurry; but it was agreed to explore the riches of the adjacent market town. The chariot was ordered, and though the articles, particularly desired, could not be procured, industry and perseverance found out many substitutes, and they returned loaden with purchases.

At the instant the carriage drove up the circle, Maria, who had in vain waited for her friend in the shrubbery, proceeded to the manor house to enquire the occasion of her absence. Charlotte excused the disappointment

ment by pleas of urgent business; and entreating her astonished friend to follow, hurried into her dressing room. There the mysterious cause of this bustle was fully explained. Maria, who by having become an eye witness of real wants, was less interested in those fastidious ones, which whim and caprice suggested, more than once interrupted a dissertation on the depth and width of the Countess's flounce, to state to her friend the situation of her pensioners. Every effort to engage attention, was however in vain, she was particularly hurt that Miss Raby should be so much engaged that morning, as it was the one, on which her promised contribution had been for some weeks regularly paid. Tired of waiting, and concluding Charlotte's hurry had made her totally forget it, at last she ventured to remind her of her promise. Miss Raby immediately drew out her purse, but in an instant recollected that it was impossible to comply with her friend's demands; for the milliner at ——— had been so obligingly pressing, that she could not avoid exceed-

ing her intended order, and had been obliged to have recourse to Jenny's pocket, to assist her to defray the bill.

The concern in the countenances of these young ladies, on this discovery, was very visible. Charlotte asked if the poor people were not well enough to do without her assistance. Maria answered, that indeed they were considerably better, but as they now required a larger portion of nourishment, and were still incapacitated from work, her charity was greatly requisite.

Charlotte asked her to advance the sum, but as Maria's pockets had been empried by private gratuity, she could not do this without her mother's knowledge, and Miss Raby had many objections against intrusting Mrs. Williams with this secret.

Charlotte, bursting into tears, sat down on the sofa, and declared that it was cruel in Maria, to torment her at a time, when she

was almost hurried and perplexed to death with her own concerns. My heroine also wept, anticipating the disappointments she should occasion, and the imputations that must fall on her friend's character, which could no way be avoided, but by a breach of the secrecy she was enjoined.

As Charlotte's distress was very vehement, it soon reached her father's ears. Wondering what new disaster could have again awakened the tender sensibility of his daughter, he hastened into her dressing room, and by his entreaties and caresses, prevailed on her to confess the cause of her grief. He at first talked a little of extravagance, but perceiving the theme only aggravated her tears; he told her she should never feel any unhappiness which money could remove, and then presented her with twice the sum she had ventured to request.

She immediately gave her friend what Maria thought sufficient for the probable exigencies

gencies during her absence, and they parted mutually pleased. Mr. Raby, however, while he accompanied Maria down stairs, begged her never more to tell his poor girl any melancholy stories, for her temper was too meek to bear them; and as he perceived that they deeply hurt her spirits, he positively must not have her made unhappy.

C H A P. IX.

MARIA could not forbear acquainting her mother with Mr. Raby's request, and added, "sure never was so affectionate a parent."

"My

“ My neighbour and I,” said Mrs. Williams, “ proceed upon very different plans in our parental conduct. I try to teach you fortitude, by familiarizing to your mind objects of affliction, and I wish to convince you, that you belong to an order of beings, whose prescribed rule of duty supposes suffering. By convincing you of the existence of real misery, I endeavour to guard you against that chimerical phantom, which often interrupts the smoothest course of human happiness. Do you think that Mr. Raby’s affectionate care can always guard his daughter from the pressure of misfortune: or will your friend meet it, when it unavoidably falls on her own head, with more firmness, because she has hitherto been kept ignorant of its effects on others?”

“ I will suppose for a moment, that your dear Charlotte will be one of those highly favoured beings, who escape real calamity. Let her life pass on in its present smooth tenor; answer me ingenuously, is she happier

pier than yourself? you are taught to enlarge your philanthropy, and though you sometimes are grieved by the sorrows of others, you know the joy of affording relief. You have often described the transports which you felt, when viewing the effect resulting from the judicious application of your friends liberality. Charlotte, on the other hand, who only considers how she may most indulge her own desires, knows no happiness which does not immediately arise from some pleasurable incident. Those desires, used to continual gratification, will in time grow irregular, perhaps contradictory; and as they cannot then be fully indulged, she will feel far more from chagrine and satiety, than you from commiserating the sorrows of others."

Maria could not controvert reasons, whose propriety a recent instance had evinced, but observed, in Charlotte's justification, that she possessed an excellent heart; and as Mrs. Williams did not contradict this assertion, the conversation ended.

After the departure of the Raby's from Bath, Maria, who by the recovery of her patients, enjoyed more leisure, resumed her usual occupations. The return of spring recalled her attention to her garden; and Mrs. Williams, who from being used to a warm climate, had been compelled to confine herself during the winter, accompanied her daughter in her morning walks. That judicious mother thought this a suitable time to introduce botanical knowledge; and by calling Maria's attention to the beauty of wild flowers, and by describing their essential characters, infused into her mind a desire of gaining a more intimate acquaintance with that amusing and useful science. With the growth of plants, natural history in all its branches, was intimately interwoven; and Maria gained sufficient knowledge of the mechanism of the universe, to have another agreeable fund of entertainment opened to her view. Her admiration, which was excited by the astonishing grandeur of design, and the minute exactness of execution, visible in all the works of creation,

creation, confirmed her religious principles, and elevated her devotion.

As her walks with her mother were a kind of easy lecture, there was leisure in the evening to introduce an entertaining geographical account of the known world. In pursuing it, Mrs. Williams adopted the same method, by which they had prosecuted their historical studies. Taught to reflect, even when amusement was the object, Maria soon gained a competent knowledge of the effect of climate and situation, in forming local prejudice and national character. She saw less ridicule in customs different from her own; and felt her pity for those people, who seemed less favoured by nature, considerably abated, by reflecting that Providence had wisely given them attachment to customs and situations, which makes the inhabitants of Greenland exulting boast of their long night of revelry and ease, and induces the naked savage panting at the lines, to

“ Bask in the glare, or stem the tepid wave,
“ And thank the gods for all the good they gave.

GOLDSMITH'S TRAVELLER.

As the inhabitants of Everdon (I mean those whose fortunes were sufficient to enable them to cultivate society) had not entirely sacrificed all their leisure moments to *an idol called* cards; conversation and the needle were often allowed to occupy the time of an afternoon visit; so that Maria was able, at these intervals, to finish several pieces of work, expressive of her taste and ingenuity. Her ability in these greatly exceeding the younger part of the society; they often applied to her for assistance and instruction, which Maria's good temper and modesty, without any assumption of consequence, cheerfully gave.

She was astonished to find how much Madame Du Pont was mistaken in the supposed dullness and sameness of Everdon. Her amusements were diversified; and as her employments regularly followed each other, she did

did not know a moment unenlivened by pursuit. Indeed, during her friend's absence, she had no one to whom she could so freely communicate her thoughts, as she had too much respect for her affectionate mother, to entrust her with any sentiments, that would not bear the test of reason; but as she was indulged with an uninspected correspondence, she had the pleasure of dispatching voluminous accounts of whatever reflections occurred to her mind.

Conscious that my readers must ere this be tired with the description of a life of rural retirement, altogether unenlivened by incident, and recollecting the opinion of a relation of our family, once Vicar of Wakefield, that we have a natural inquisitiveness after high living and high lived company, I will, for the sake of variety, conclude this chapter with an epistle from Miss Raby to Maria.

The inconceivable hurry we are forced to live in, has hitherto prevented me from ac-

knowledging my dear Maria's kind letters, which with the utmost difficulty I have found time to read. You have no conception what fatigue I endure. The pump-room, shopping, morning visitors, dressing, and evening engagements, hardly permit me to swallow my food: and were I not forced to exert myself, I should die with the head-ach. I have had a vast deal of trouble in providing new dresses; since those which I made up at Everdon, were all gothic before I arrived here; and on entering the pump-room in one of them, Lady Jane Bellmour was convulsed with laughter, and declared my appearance reminded her of the tale of the beauty that slept one hundred years, and astonished the prince who awoke her, by the antiquity of her dress.

(1) You may guess how happy I am, when I tell you I find the Countess has determined to stay here during the season. I am always of her parties. Some scribbling wit has been malicious enough to make satirical verses on
her

her and Sir Harry. Her ladyship, with the utmost good humour, laughs, and declares, when her woman has copied them, she will send them to Lord Twaddle herself. I never will believe there is any harm in her friendship for Sir Harry; I know her to be the most obliging charming woman in the world, and she really has an excellent heart. Sometimes, 'tis true, she is a little odd and distant, but if people of her rank may not be capricious, pray who should? Major Pierpoint is almost constantly with us, and the Countess rallies me about him incessantly. She vows he is deeply in love, because he is so absent. I deny it utterly to her ladyship, but upon my word, Maria, I begin to think his attentions are uncommon: he always endeavours to engage me for his partner, and if I refuse, his vexation is so evident, that I enjoy it excessively, and Lady Twaddle tells me I deserve neglect, nay, loss of beauty, if I reduce such a charming fellow to despair. Indeed sometimes I think I am wrong, for I

hear he plays high; and doubtless that is to banish the thoughts of my indifference.

I am not able to answer your questions (for I never yet have been able to find an opportunity to go to church. As to the soil, productions, and face of the surrounding country, I am totally ignorant; all I can tell you is, that there are some fine prospects from different parts of the city, at which we cast just a cursory look, for it is too like a novice to admire them. Really, Maria, you have selected very odd subjects for your enquiries.

I repeated one day in a genteel company, your questions relative to the causes of the heat, and salubrious qualities of the water. Major Pierpoint told me, that as this spot has been long honoured by the peculiar assemblage of beauties, these properties were bestowed by nature, to improve the roses on their cheeks, and melt the ice in their bosoms. I only repeat this as an instance of the Major's wit and politeness; but as he is now
below,

below, waiting to escort us to the play, I cannot add more than an assurance of the unalterable truth and affection of

CHARLOTTE RABY.

P. S. I forgot to tell you that my father is well, but rather out of humour, and sometimes quite snappish to the Major, which makes me very unhappy.

C H A P. X.

MARIA'S sensations at reading the preceding letter, were of the mixed kind; if her heart exulted at one sentence, it turned with disgust from another. What most

most astonished her was, that Lady Twaddle should exult at finding her behaviour to Sir Harry had attracted public attention. She did not dispute Charlotte's opinion, that it was a proof of innocence; she only thought it odd that innocence should not resent, rather than be pleased at criminal imputations. As the letter, on the whole, was not what she wished her mother to see, she was glad to find only general enquiries were made after the health and happiness of her friend; and after perusing it, she carefully deposited it in her escritoire.

About this time Mrs. Williams's happiness met with a very agreeable addition. A friend, with whom she had been particularly intimate in Jamaica, came to live in England, and on her account fixed on Everdon for her residence. Mrs. Herbert was a widow lady of genteel fortune; her family consisted of only one son, who had been educated at Oxford, and was then gone to make the tour of Europe with a young nobleman,

nobleman, more in the capacity of a friend, than a tutor.

As Mrs. Herbert was one of those worthy people who are respectable even in their failings and infirmities, and had rendered Mrs. Williams many essential services, that grateful woman exulted in the thought, that her recovered health would enable her to administer to the wants of her declining and venerable friend, who was now advanced into the vale of years ; and Maria, who had often deprived herself of Miss Raby's society, from a reluctance to leave her mother alone, was pleased with the thought that she had recovered a companion, whose loss she had often regretted with gratitude and respect.

The Everdon party was soon after completed by the return of the Raby's. Charlotte did not come back with all the eclat and gaiety which her friend expected. Her father too seemed to accost her with less cordiality ; and when Maria enquired after the

Major, Miss Raby forbade her, on any account, to mention his name. The good humour of the easy citizen, indeed soon returned, but his daughter grew more fretful every hour; the ostensible cause of which was, the dulness and sameness of country occupations.

Anxious to relieve her uneasiness, Maria strove to engage her in literary pursuits. The sciences she knew, required more attention than her friend was mistress of; but as she had lately been indulged by her mother in a perusal of lighter works, she thought Essays and Poetry might bid fair to please. She soon perceived, with concern, that unless love was the subject, Charlotte turned with disgust from the uninteresting volume. This circumstance, added to the charge, never to mention the Major, suggested an idea she would not for the world have communicated; it was however considerably augmented by her friend's bursting into tears whilst perusing the following verses:

Ah

Ah, happy nymph ! who still can boast,
She chains the rover I have lost ;
Happy, while yet she hears him breathe,
A tale that charms but too deceive :
Happy while yet her eye can trace
His manly forms, attractive grace.
His brows with chestnut ringlets crown'd,
As laurets once Apollo's bound ;
And like the god, his eye of fire
Might well the muses harp inspire.
Cupid, the god of amorous wiles
Has tip'd love's arrows with his smiles ;
He speaks, and the soft tones impart,
Conviction to the hearer's heart.
He pleads, and feminine disdain
Confesses all resistance vain :
Nor but too late like me shall rue
A dream too pleasing to be true.
For on hopes brilliant morn full soon
Shall steal the clouded languid noon,
No more shall Florio seek to please
By blending tenderness with ease :
Each winning grace thine eye shall see,
No longer bloom, I mean for thee,
With anguish thou shalt first perceive
His brow can frown, his accents grieve ;
His eye, whence love's warm glances flew,
Can gaze at careless distance too.
And when the youth shall coldly turn,
Or sternly thy fond dalliance spurn,
Wilt thou then praise his form divine,
Nor feel contempt and rage like mine ?

But

But ah ! nor anger nor disdain
 Shall e'er thy ruin'd peace regain ;
 No longer shalt thou sit at ease,
 Fan'd by the evening's gentlest breeze ;
 And while the black birds chaunt in pairs,
 Listen with spirits blithe as theirs :
 But, like the deer who tries to rest,
 While the barb'd arrow pains her breast,
 Thy heart condemn'd to drag its chain,
 Shall change its prison but in vain.
 Nor meads nor shades shall give thee ease
 Nor crowds divert, nor silence please ;
 'Till thou canst bid remembrance cease,
 Shall Floria's image murder peace.

Charlotte dwelt on the justness and applicability of these lines, with uncommon earnestness ; and perceiving Maria was not so liberal of her commendations, plainly told her, she was determined never to be of her opinion.

Maria vindicated herself by saying, that though she admired the poetry, she was not pleased with the ardency of passion it suggested ; for she thought neglect would instantly cure an ingenuous mind of the infatuation

tuation of misplaced love. Receiving no answer to this observation, she produced a little manuscript, which was more suited to her benevolent heart than the preceding. It was a translation from the Latin, and had been given her by Mrs. Herbert that morning. The good lady had apologized for its defects, by saying it had been done by her son for a school exercise, and was more to be commended for its fidelity, than poetical ornaments.

“ It pleases me,” said Maria, “ as a specimen of the simplicity with which the ancients expressed their sentiments.” The subject is

A PRISON.

Approach, oh muse, who bidst the plaintive harp,

The flow of melting melody prolong ;

Who guides the lyre with cadence bold and sharp,

Through all the mazes of enchanting song.

Leave for a while the verse-inspiring grove,

And Helicon's green bank befring'd with flowers ;

With me through misery's horrid dungeon rove,

Where fancy marshals all her hideous powers.

How

How foul-appealing is the prospect ! there
 Rebellious discord scornful clanks her chain ;
 Loud hiss the snakes in her dishevel'd hair,
 While keen impatience aggravates her pain.
 There care in sombre vest desponding sighs
 Here guilty fear anticipates his doom,
 And while death's dreaded image multiplies,
 His shrieks re-echo's through the night's pale gloom.
 Am I deceiv'd, or does thine eye benign
 Beam soft through mild compassion's glittering tear,
 To see the wretched unassisted pine,
 To see the captive left to perish here ?
 He droops, he languishes, as withering plants
 Languish beneath the sun beam's noon-tide glare ;
 By fever scorch'd, in agony he pants,
 No tender consort sooths his mortal care.
 Tir'd of oppressive woe's continual weight,
 He calls on death to close his weary eyes ;
 Anon his infants seek the iron grate,
 And break the mournful silence by their cries.—
 These scenes of anguish suit not thee, sweet muse,
 To paint these horrors, I no more aspire ;
 In some cool grot or verdant mead I chuse,
 To court the zephyr, and to strike the lyre.

Maria was going to explain some passages
 that she thought might appear less easy to her
 friend, but she was interrupted by Charlotte
 declaring, that she thought it very pedantic
 and

and uninteresting; then recurring to the verses
with which she was charmed, observed, how
particularly descriptive that part was, which
figures the lady's concern at the alteration
of her lover's countenance. She was going
on, when Maria archly observed, that her
friend spoke like an experienced votary of
Cupid's. Charlotte colouring, assured her,
that she positively detested all men breath-
ing; but added, if she could but live to see
Maria deeply in love, she should be the hap-
piest creature in the world.

C H A P. XI.

DETERMINED as Miss Raby was, to bury in her own breast the cause of the uneasiness visible to all, she soon found herself unequal to the task enjoined. I would not have the younger part of my readers suppose, that nature had niggardly denied to the fair Charlotte the power of stifling her complaints, and burying in silence sentiments, which she was ashamed to discover. I only mean that her inclinations, by habitual indulgence, were now grown almost irresistible; and as she fancied it would be pleasant to converse with Maria on the subject of her distress

distress, she did not chuse to give herself the pain of exerting sufficient fortitude to counteract that desire. After an oath of secrecy, and a promise never to begin the subject in any future conversation, she disclosed her mournful narrative.

A little time after she wrote her letter from Bath, the Major actually made her declarations of love: but while she was debating in what manner to treat him after the discovery, her father, whose suspicions had long been excited, forbade her lover his house, and treated him so rudely, that Pierpoint, who was a man of great spirit and rigid honour, had, in a large company, where the affair was mentioned, laid his hand upon his sword, and in a peremptory tone declared, "that nothing but Raby's age and insignificance, preserved him from his resentment." This some invidious person had repeated, and in consequence of it, her father hurried her from Bath.

Previous

Previous to her departure, she wrote to the Major, and assured him of her disapprobation of her father's behaviour; but she had received no answer; nay, worse, Lady Twaddle sent her word, that his attentions to Miss Mandeville were so marked, that they furnished a subject for common conversation.

Miss Raby's indignation here, interrupted her story. She knew her rival's fortune was not sufficient to engage a matrimonial address; but even the idea of a flirtation was more than she could support, and whatever it cost her, she was determined to detach him from that odious girl.

Maria entered warmly into her friend's resentment. She was astonished that a man who had once loved her dear Charlotte, could even for a moment affect a preference for a person to whom, though entirely unknown, she had ascribed all the bad qualities which her candid and gentle mind would permit her to associate in any human being. But indeed

indeed the Major's whole conduct was totally irreconcilable with the deference, perseverance, and fidelity which she attached to the name of lover; and she supposed that it was only necessary to tell her friend's story, to cover him with reproach and detestation. My readers will perceive Maria was equally a novice to the manners of the world and to love.

Though partial to her friend in the extreme, yet she could not avoid (on a retrospect of her conduct) perceiving many circumstances of blame. Filial duty had now gained so great an ascendancy over her mind, that it might be termed her ruling passion; and Charlotte's behaviour was totally irreconcilable with her sentiments on this head. She was too ingenuous to conceal her disapprobation, and Miss Raby very frankly confessed her faults, but extenuated them by saying, her subsequent conduct should be directed by the strictest rules which prudence could devise. Pluming herself upon the virtues

she intended to practise, she soon suppressed all that uneasy consciousness of former error, which would have introduced cautious timidity, and eagerly entered on her future trials, as easy steps to certain victory.

Mean time her father, whose paternal concern had been deeply excited by the anxiety of which he too well guessed the cause, had thoughtfully revolved in his own mind the likeliest means to remove it; and having heard much of the efficacy of a new lover, in effacing the image of an old one, he wrote to his banker in London, an account of his daughter's intended fortune; an encomium on her merit, and an enumeration of the requisites that must meet in the character of his future son. To form this happy being, three good things were necessary; good temper, good conduct, and a good fortune; but the last excellence was principally insisted upon.

A person

A person was soon found, in general estimation, to answer this description, and Mr. Vandermulin, the only son of an eminent merchant, was justly deputed by the gods of wealth and love, to pay a matrimonial visit to Everdon. He seemed no bad representative of the two divinities, as his person was handsome, and his dress and retinue splendid.

Unfortunately, flattery had in his early youth whispered to him, that the immense wealth to which he was born, must irresistably enforce from the world that attention, which they, who at their birth were less favoured by fortune, can only hope to acquire by industry, or the pursuit of literary attainments. He therefore wasted in boyish diversions, the important hours that ought to have been sacred to instruction, and consequently he arrived at the age of manhood with a wish, rather than an ability, to enjoy the ample wealth he possessed. Too narrow in his conceptions to distinguish gentility

from pomp, or the elegant gentleman from the mechanical automaton, which riches can purchase of the taylor and the hair-dresser, he was contented with forming his external appearance by the etiquette of fashion; and as he was perfect in the small talk of the day, and abounded in servility which he mistook for complaisance, he mixed with great self complacency, in circles of which he was the constant jest. A natural insensibility of temper, and frigidity of heart, preserved him alike from feeling contempt, and from engaging in scenes of dissipation. This turn of mind, my readers will allow, is naturally unfavourable to the exertion of benevolence and virtue, unless called forth by some acquired principle. I am sorry to add, that selfishness was the sentiment most carefully instilled into the breast of young Vandermulin. The motive of his visit was announced by a letter from his father. He delivered his credentials, and Mr. Raby knew too well the largeness of trade and capital annexed to the house of Vandermulin,

Vandermulin, to hesitate a moment in giving him a most cordial reception.

He was soon introduced to Charlotte, and the father with great pleasure beheld the young lady receive his overtures with visible satisfaction.

Indeed, the transport she felt, was like her sorrows, too great to be confined to her own breast. She sent for Maria, and after again charging her never to breathe a syllable of her attachment to Major Pierpoint; she assured her friend that it was entirely conquered; that she felt a lively esteem for her new lover, and was resolved, by her ready acquiescence in her father's will, to atone for all past indiscretions.

Maria was delighted with the news, and eagerly begged to be introduced to the young merchant, with whom, as the destined husband of her Charlotte, she wished to cultivate a friendly intimacy. With all the mo-

dest sprightliness, and ingenuous candour peculiar to her character, she endeavoured to draw him into conversation; but sorry I am to observe, that conversation was not his forte. All the endeavours of the ladies could procure nothing further than an affirmative, or an observation quite as simple and acquiescent.

When people are determined to be pleased, they seldom plague themselves with refined disquisitions. The girls, when by themselves, readily joined in praising their beau. Charlotte admired his fine person, well dressed hair, and superb waistcoat; and Maria talked of his ~~extrem~~ good nature, ^{extra} respectful obligingness, and she was going to add, modest timidity, but finding that her friend did not include that in the catalogue of male virtues, she shortened her panegyrics.

A day of triumph was now projected, which was fully to indemnify Charlotte for all her
past

past mortifications. She had received an invitation to dine with Mrs. Robson, and she knew that Miss Mandeville was returned from Bath, and would be of the party. Nothing more need be said to explain her intended happiness.

Mrs. Williams was prevailed upon to let Maria partake of her friend's exultation, and on the day appointed, she accompanied Mr. Raby in his chariot.

Miss Raby, dressed in a style of the highest elegance, was driven by Mr. Vandermulin in his phaeton and four, and followed by three out-riders.

As I am writing to ladies, I chuse rather to trust to their feelings, than to flatten, by my inadequate description, the pleasure which they must suppose our fair coquette felt, when the carriages drove up the circle at Mrs. Robson's, and she perceived amongst the number which this extraordinary bustle

had attracted to the drawing-room windows, the visage of Miss Mandeville, which was, in Charlotte's idea, much lengthened by malevolence. She sprung up the steps, and swam into the room with all the ease of conscious pre-eminence; then taking a chair by her rival belle, strove to compleat her misery by the most condescending attentions.

Mr. Raby, meantime, was busily employed in introducing his friend (he looked very significantly when he spoke that word) to the company, and in exerting all the ingenuity of which he was capable, to impress an idea of his wealth and consequence. No circumstance happened, however trivial, but it served to assist his grand design. Did any one mention the storms, common at the summer solstice, he applied to the young merchant, to know if this did not make his heart ach for the safety of the large fleet which his father expected.

Did

Did politics engross the conversation, Mr. Raby was only anxious to know what effect the consequences which they deduced, would have upon the three per cents. in which a worthy friend of his, that gentleman's father, had lodged near one hundred thousand pounds.

If any body spoke of a good house, it was nothing to Mr. Vandermulin's seat in —shire. Even culinary subjects afforded an opportunity to enumerate the frequency of turtle and venison at his friend's table; in fine, the Vandermulins were paragons of excellence, and all competition was vain; while the smiling lover silently bowed assent to all these well meant panegyrics.

But fate, ever unpropitious to the wishes of Charlotte, prepared new mortifications. Just before tea was served, Major Pierpoint unexpectedly made his appearance; and though a common riding dress gave him an air of dishabille, an easy deportment and elegance

of dress, announced the man of fashion, without any decorating appendages.

Charlotte coloured; Mr. Raby was struck dumb. The Major politely stepped round the circle, and said something in a low tone to every individual, which put them in good humour with themselves. He then seated himself; but with an air of recollection and respectful distance, addressed himself to Mr. Raby, expressing his hopes, that his residence at Bath had proved beneficial to his health.

To Charlotte he expatiated on his concern, that she left that agreeable place before she was thoroughly initiated into its amusements and beauties.

He then enlarged on a public breakfast given by Lord S——, but two days after her departure, and assured her that many of her friends, himself amongst the number, could scarce enjoy it, through regret at her absence.

Mr.

Mr. Raby and his daughter were much too surpris'd and agitated, to reply, and our gay military blade now attacked Mr. Vandermulin.

Never, certainly, was there a more complete contrast. The icy reserve in which the young merchant had hitherto been wrapped, was forced to dissolve instantaneously before the warm beams of the soldier's irresistible versatility. This was unfortunate; for silence was as favourable to Charlotte's new lover, as conversation was to her old one. The company soon began to smile, then to titter, at last a general laugh took place.

Pierpoint, who observed the strictest politeness of manner, and command of countenance, looked round with affected astonishment, to discover from what cause the laugh proceeded. This did but redouble the peal of merriment, and Vandermulin, who was really as ignorant of the cause as his rival appeared.

peared to be, by joining in it, rendered it compleat.

But Mr. Raby, who restrained by vexation and terror, had suffered his features to relax no farther than a smile, being informed the carriages were ready, hurried his daughter from the dangerous comparison. The Major sprang towards her, and respectfully taking her hand, led her to the phaeton, and then with a bow, which she judged indicative of love and despair, resigned her to the care of his competitor.

Miss Raby returned home silent and dejected. A person dissatisfied with their own conduct, is apt to transfer to others the resentment which properly belongs to themselves.

Charlotte, after making every one around her sensible of her displeasure, retired early to spend a sleepless night, in thinking of the happiness that would have been her portion,
if

if Mr. Vandermulin and the Major could but change characters.

That philosophy which I wish my readers to possess, is constantly occupied in assimilating our desires with our situations. Sorry I am to observe, that my heroine's friend was totally ignorant of this useful science; had she known it, she would have found the vast weight of misery, under which she now sunk, a very supportable burden.

Mr. Raby was informed by Jenny, the next morning, that her young lady was dreadfully indisposed. The terrified father immediately sent for an eminent physician; but her disorder, which was violent hystericks, would not yield to any medical prescription. At last Jenny was bribed to confess, that love for the Major was the sole cause of her mistress's complaints, and that she must either die, or have her heart relieved of its insupportable anguish.

Mr.

Mr. Raby, whose indulgent love had never known how to resist the least desire of his child, felt on this occasion all that undetermined anxiety, which concern for her present situation, and regard for her future welfare, excited.

The fear of losing her, as her paroxysms grew hourly more violent, at length prevailed; and he assured her of his entire compliance with her wishes; which, with the intelligence that Mr. Vandermulin was absolutely dismissed, produced so amazing a change, that in a few hours she appeared perfectly recovered.

The difficulty now was, in what way to allure the Major to renew his addresses. Miss Raby was positive, that though he had entirely stifled his resentment, he still continued too susceptible of his former ill usage, to visit them without an express intimation that his company would be agreeable; and fearing a relapse, if her sentiments were opposed,

posed, her father reluctantly wrote to the young soldier, and expressed his wishes to see him at the manor.

CHAP. XII.

LET me now give a clue to the character of this all-conquering son of Mars; the favourite of the fair, distinguished for elegance, expence, and dissipation. The arrow of love, which had so deeply pierced Charlotte's heart, had but feebly tinkled on the Major's. If it did not appear like an attempt at wit, I could explain my reason for adopting an epithet applicable to metallic substances, by observing, that in his breast

gold

gold had entirely usurped what ought to have been the seat of the softer passions.

Shuddering at the idea of matrimony, lest it should abridge that valued liberty, which in the world's eye excuses licentiousness, he never thought of the fair sex but as an occasional amusement, unless; when an ill run of luck at the gaming table, convinced him of the necessity of employing some ways and means to recruit a decayed fortune.

He was in these circumstances, when he first made proposals to the fair heiress of Everdon; and his resentment at her father's behaviour, and her own coquetish humour, was raised by an unexpected influx of good fortune, to the most confirmed indignation of insulted honour. But as the manners of those, whose conduct depends on the turn of a die, are ever varying, a melancholy reverse, and the refusal of a woman, whose estate was superior, again returned this shuttlecock admirer to Miss Raby,

Her

Her behaviour at Mrs. Robson's, convinced him of his interest in her heart; and he knew too well her father's tenderness, to doubt his ultimate compliance, or to fear the wealth, or even the smiles of his handsome rival. Indeed, he judged it would be necessary to corroborate with her inclinations; and whilst he was reflecting in what manner he should renew his suit, Mr. Raby's letter informed him, that his kind mistress had removed every difficulty, and had left him no more to do, but to possess the reward of his triumph.

Major Pierpoint was not among the number of the few lovers, that feel their tender esteem confirmed, by perceiving that the lady entertains an attachment as forcible as their own. Instead of behaving at Raby-Hall with all the gratitude and tenderness of a man who is speedily to receive wealth and happiness from a beloved object, our military lover's manner was marked by that careless ease, and happy consciousness, which a man, sensible of his

his own worth, can assume. Perceiving even distant attentions, highly grateful to Charlotte, he consulted his own character, rather than her expectations, and deemed it quite sufficient to be civil and polite.

When Mr. Raby gently hinted the threats he had thrown out at Bath, he refused to be catechized for faults, which Miss Raby's conduct had convinced him were forgiven.

He answered enquiries about his rent-roll, by dissertations on his rank, situation, and connexions; yet to Charlotte, (who exulted in the idea of fixing the rover, against whom so many bright eyes had in vain directed their artillery) this non-obeisance had a charm, which the most passionate admiration from another could not possess.

Preliminaries are soon fixed, when one side is determined to yield; but Miss Raby, whose coquettish disposition had not yet entirely subsided, was desirous of exhibiting, for a little time,

time, the accomplished beau, whom she held in chains. Besides, it was her wish to appear with all the eclat of bridal splendor, in the gay circles of the metropolis; for these reasons, therefore, her nuptials were deferred till the commencement of the ensuing winter.

C H A P. XIII.

THE interesting events at Raby-Hall, have long detained me from the domestic and serene life of the amiable Maria, to whom I now with pleasure return.

As her innocent mind, formed for confidence, delighted in the free interchange of sentiments

sentiments with her inmates and friends, she felt happy in being released from the injunction of secrecy, and frequently conversed with her mother upon the subject of her friend. Still partial to Charlotte, she endeavoured, with the sweetest simplicity, to excuse those errors which her candour forced her to allow; and she sometimes apologized for her past levity, by saying, that she was happy to think the dear girl would be exposed to no more trials, but would enjoy in the protection of the man she loved, all the peace and security incident to the matronly character.

Mrs. Williams, though unwilling to destroy the pleasure which this reflection afforded, thought it her duty to remove some erroneous ideas, which inexperience occasioned her daughter to entertain, and after having passed a compliment to Charlotte's disinterestedness, in declining the addresses of the man of wealth whom she could not love, she thus proceeded.

“ You,

“ You, perhaps, my dear, will wonder if I doubt the reality of your friend’s attachment. You will tell me, that the partiality to which she has sacrificed not only prudence, as it regards fortune; but I fear I must add, as connected with delicacy, must be real. Before you affirm it to be so, tell me, Maria, what qualities does Major Pierpoint possess, upon which love may, with propriety, be founded? you say his knowledge is rather specious than substantial; this argues no intellectual pre-eminence; and when you own that his negligent behaviour to Charlotte often brings tears into her eyes, you militate sadly against the goodness of his moral qualities. I know that you will not urge advantages, merely personal, as a motive for love; let us then cast a retrospect on your friend’s conduct.

“ She first appeared to like him as a partner at a ball; she thought of him more seriously, when assured by Lady Twaddle, that he was in love with her; but when he actually

tually made her proposals, she appeared in doubt how to act, and was only confirmed in his favour by her father's disapprobation. Mortified at his neglect, but anxious to have a lover, she seemed very well reconciled to the attendance of Vandermulin, 'till an unfortunate rencontre placed Pierpoint in a more agreeable point of view than his rival; and it is only from that time that she has seemed consistent in her conduct, and decided in her preference.

“ Forgive me, Maria, but I must trace your friend's conduct to a passion very opposite to love, I mean vanity. You start—we have all our failings—I can reconcile her conduct to no other principle. To be the object of envy and admiration, is your Charlotte's ruling passion; and whether it fixes on immense wealth, or genteel deportment, it is still vanity; if you doubt it, answer two questions.

“ Do

“ Do you think your friend could be happy with her dear Major, in retirement, where no one but simple rustics could admire her choice; or do you think, if at Mrs. Robson's, the gentlemen, instead of displaying their wit, had exhibited their purses, and the applause of the company had been directed to him, who in this competition proved triumphant, that she would have changed her ideas of the young merchant so instantaneously?”

Maria smiled at this supposition, and confessed that she believed her friend had pictured to herself very strongly what the world would say of her conquest, and she thought it equally true, that Vandermulin would not have been so soon dismissed, if the laugh against him at Mrs. Robson's had not been so universal.

“ I see, my dear,” resumed Mrs. Williams, “ that you must soon give up a passion which depends so entirely upon the opinion of others. I have no doubt but Miss Raby is
firmly

firmly persuaded of its reality, and I must now wish that the delusion may last. May she never regret the too yielding temper of her kind father, or lament that she did not exert more self-command. Her prospects, Maria, appear to you agreeable; I look at them with concern. Major Pierpoint has not hitherto shewn himself to be a man capable of exalting a girlish fancy into rational esteem; and I greatly doubt whether your Charlotte will ever find herself so happy as she would have been, if she could have suppressed her idea of the necessity of always having a lover, and having buried in her own breast, an inclination which I must term the offspring of caprice, if she had resigned Vandermulin to his money bags, and the Major to Miss Mandeville, and waited till riper years produced a more rational attachment.

These reflections threw Maria into a fit of pensive recollection; to divert it, Mrs. Williams begged her to fetch her guitar, and adapt it to the words of the following song.

Still

Still shall delighted taste revere
 The peaceful groves to science dear,
 The plain, the beech, the olive's shade,
 All sacred to the Athenian maid ;
 With these the Heliconian bay,
 Inspirer of th' immortal lay !

2

The happy few who here reside,
 Safe from th' oppressor's wrongs abide,
 Tempests of passion or of fate
 May shake the mansions of the great ;
 Yet shall the sacred laurel guard
 The studious sage, and raptur'd bard.

3

The myrtle Paphia's queen bequeaths,
 May boast fair flowers and fragrant wreaths ;
 But can it like the bay defy
 The rigour of the wintry sky ;
 Or, as Minerva's Olive bear
 Rich fruits, as well as blossoms fair ?

4

Oh ! gather in life's early prime,
 The produce which despises time ;
 Waste not in pleasure's soothing bowers
 Youth's irrecoverable hours ;
 Those hours in folly's book enroll'd,
 Or stamp'd by wisdom's seal of gold.

5

Oh! seize the time, with happiest aim
 Awake exertion's powerful flame;
 Now bend to reason's calm controul
 Each rebel passion of the soul:
 And from th' approving gods demand
 Immortal glory's starry band.

C H A P. XIV.

MR S. Williams, who had for some time perceived, with unspeakable pleasure, that her daughter submitted to retirement, no less from motives of inclination, than from duty, began to fear, lest the approaching marriage of her friend should derange the system she wished to pursue, either
 by

by renewing her desire for the pleasures of the great world, into which Charlotte was about to enter; or by causing a vacuity in her employments, which it would be difficult to fill.

She had however the satisfaction to find, that her apprehensions were erroneous. So far from wishing to partake of the bride's gaiety, Maria congratulated herself on the thought, that she should know, by description, every party of pleasure in which they had been engaged, when the Major and his lady returned in the spring to Everdon, without feeling the fatigue and hurry incident to the reality. As to the time she used to spend with Charlotte, she had planned a number of fresh engagements, that would fully employ it. She determined to assign a large portion of it to Mrs. Herbert, and as that worthy woman's infirmities had greatly impaired her companionable powers, and rendered her interesting only to those who could value intrinsic worth, such a resolution indisputably

proved the excellence of Maria's heart. She had besides determined to make her friend a wedding present; and as her finances would not admit of much expence, she resolved that her needle and pencil should give it an additional value; and lastly, she proposed to attend more regularly to the concerns of the little school which she had established; and having selected a few of the best scholars, she determined to give them such further improvement as was suitable to their situation, and superior to what their dame could bestow.

Such was Maria's plan. Her mother contemplated her with all the transport of maternal love, and with all its apprehension. This exemplary woman had hitherto been employed in improving her understanding, and elucidating her judgment; and she perceived the happy effect of her care in the temper and manner of her child.

There

There is a passion, whose influence is often most fatal in minds of superior excellence ; a passion which blasts the sanguine glow of parental hope, and sinks with premature depression the lively cheerfulness so agreeable in youth. My fair readers will wonder that an old maid can intend this animated description for love, but it was with that passion Mrs. Williams feared to contend.

An accurate observer of Maria's character, she perceived enthusiasm to be its predominate fault, and in the instance of her friendship for Miss Raby, she was convinced that the warmth of her attachments would be equalled by their durability ; for though her consciousness of Charlotte's errors was often a source of distress, her love remained unaltered, or rather strengthened by time and intimacy.

Mrs. Williams had indeed wished to cultivate in her daughter a retired domestic turn of mind ; but it was principally from her apprehension

prehenſion of Maria's forming ſome premature attachment, that ſhe had endeavoured to ſeclude her from the danger of mixed ſociety; and as care often defeats its object, perhaps in this inſtance ſhe carried her preſentiment of danger too far.

One fine autumnal evening, Maria, who had been to ſpend the day with her friend, then confined to the houſe by a ſlight indiſpoſition, to avoid the wet graſs in the ſhrubbery, as it was later than uſual, choſe to walk home by the horſe road.

She had proceeded to the middle of the lane, when ſhe was overtaken by a gentleman, accoutered as a ſportſman, who ſtruck by the ſimplicity, neatneſs, and beauty of her appearance, entered into converſation with her about general topics; the fineneſs of the evening, and the beautiful ſcenes which the country at that ſeaſon of the year preſented.

There

There was no impropriety in this rencontre, yet when Maria perceived that her mother, alarmed at her stay, was coming to meet her, a visible confusion took place, of the ingenuous vivacity which previously distinguished her manner.

The stranger instantly accosted Mrs. Williams with equal politeness and freedom, but that lady, whose natural frankness had been considerably chilled by the unpleasant lessons which experience teaches, replied only with that cool civility which the laws of good breeding required; and Maria, on comparing the difference of her behaviour to her mother's, grew fearful of having been guilty of a fault, and continued silent the rest of the way.

When arrived at the gate which led to their garden, the ladies courtesied, the stranger respectfully took leave, and proceeded on his walk; but Maria, notwithstanding her mother's intimation that the evening was damp,

continued looking down the lane until the gentleman was out of sight.

Error is so deeply intermixed with human affairs, that even those plans which at first view are esteemed perfect, contain, on a nearer inspection, a portion of ill. Thus, that retired way of life, which seems, on a first view, most favourable to the culture of female virtue, unhappily engenders that romantic turn of mind which is frequently fatal to female peace. This humour is remedied by an early commerce with the world; and a girl, with half Maria's sense, who has been long accustomed to the general attentions of the other sex, will laugh to hear me say, that the extraordinary incident of being escorted an hundred yards, by an unknown beau, was sufficient to annihilate the cheerfulness, and disturb the attention of a lovely girl of nineteen, during a whole evening.

Her mother, by whom the least change of manners, did not pass unobserved, wondered, that

that instead of chatting with her usual ease upon the little adventures of the day, she mentioned not a syllable of her accidental companion; but as this exemplary parent carefully avoided the most distant appearance of prying curiosity, she forbore any enquiry. She knew Maria's mind was invigorated by sentiments, that would enable her with spirit and propriety to repress audacity, and resent insult, and cheerfully trusted to her conduct.

C H A P. XV.

I Mean now to follow the stranger, whom I desire my readers to recognize by the name of Stanley. He was much struck with

G. 5. the

the agreeable aspect of the village nymph, and supposing her confusion, at the appearance of her mother, to be the effect which austerity naturally causes in a susceptible heart impatient of restraint, he resolved to be more fully satisfied of the truth of these his suggestions.

With this design he stopped at a public house at the end of the lane, and after calling for some refreshment, enquired of the host, to whom the neat house, which he had just passed, belonged.

My host, who for garrulity, scorned to yield the palm of superiority to Madam Du Pont; and delighted with a guest, whose appearance announced more gentility than he was accustomed to in his visitors, exerted all his powers of entertainment. But I should have premised, that Mrs. Williams had not confined her attention merely to the wants of her poor neighbours; she had also inspected their morals, and had ever, in her charity,
given

given a preference to those who least frequented public houses, which she considered as the chief origin of the vices of the lower orders of mankind. I am not going to examine the truth of this position, but will observe, that amongst the enemies this opinion created, was the master of the Blue Boar, who determined, now he had an opportunity, to give vent to his indignation.

He began therefore by saying, "that she was a bookish gentlewoman, and counted deadly cunning, but as far as he knew, he thought she seemed to have a mort of pride, and most folks thought her stingy. What was worse, she was wonderful strict with Miss, who was as pretty good humoured a looking kind of body as ever he wished to see. He told several anecdotes in support of his opinion, but as it is unnecessary to repeat them, I will only observe, for the information of such readers as are unacquainted with rustic characters, that when they mean to describe a person as wholly detestable, they in a laconic

way call them proud and stingy ; and again, good humour and freeness, by which word they mean liberality, comprises all the virtues of which they can form an idea. This little digression may be useful to those who wish to acquire rural popularity, and as it may often be gained by a nod or a smile, I would advise them to make the cheap purchase.

Mr. Stanley, who possessed a head, that would have done honour to a better heart, listened with exultation to a description which corresponded with the opinion he had already formed. From the simple outline given by the landlord, he finished full length portraits. He conceived it would be no difficult matter to persuade an unexperienced girl, tired of confinement, to quit the rigid rules prescribed by a severe mother, and fly to a protector who promised freedom and pleasure. From every circumstance of their cottage and appearance, he judged she had not been used to the indulgence of wealth, and it was in his power to increase the temptation he held

held out, by the strong allurements of affluence. What he principally depended upon, was the powerful efficacy of solicitations from a lover, whose person and manner far exceeded any one she had ever seen. This, self-love assured him must be irresistible, but at any rate this pursuit promised a relief from ennui, during the time, which through some awkward circumstances, he was obliged to pass in retirement, and if defeated in his projects, he could but abandon them. For hitherto love, though he had often affected an intimacy, had, like a distant respectful guest, paid but short visits to his heart, and always departed exactly at the time prefixed.

It is the property of guilt, through timidity, to assume those disguises of low cunning, which virtue contemns, because ignorant of their use.

Stanley fancied, that the licentious design he dared to form against Maria, would become visible even to the indiscriminating eye.

way call them proud and stingy; and again, good humour and freeness, by which word they mean liberality, comprises all the virtues of which they can form an idea. This little digression may be useful to those who wish to acquire rural popularity, and as it may often be gained by a nod or a smile, I would advise them to make the cheap purchase.

Mr. Stanley, who possessed a head, that would have done honour to a better heart, listened with exultation to a description which corresponded with the opinion he had already formed. From the simple outline given by the landlord, he finished full length portraits. He conceived it would be no difficult matter to persuade an unexperienced girl, tired of confinement, to quit the rigid rules prescribed by a severe mother, and fly to a protector who promised freedom and pleasure. From every circumstance of their cottage and appearance, he judged she had not been used to the indulgence of wealth, and it was in his power to increase the temptation he held

held out, by the strong allurements of affluence. What he principally depended upon, was the powerful efficacy of solicitations from a lover, whose person and manner far exceeded any one she had ever seen. This, self-love assured him must be irresistible, but at any rate this pursuit promised a relief from ennui, during the time, which through some awkward circumstances, he was obliged to pass in retirement, and if defeated in his projects, he could but abandon them. For hitherto love, though he had often affected an intimacy, had, like a distant respectful guest, paid but short visits to his heart, and always departed exactly at the time prefixed.

It is the property of guilt, through timidity, to assume those disguises of low cunning, which virtue contemns, because ignorant of their use.

Stanley fancied, that the licentious design he dared to form against Maria, would become visible even to the indiscriminating eye.

of rustic simplicity, unless he cautiously concealed it by affected indifference.

Suddenly turning the discourse, he enquired after other neighbouring families; and his host, delighted with having an opportunity of displaying his store of intelligence, was copious in the recital. He did not need answers; it was lucky he did not, for his guest was too absorbed in thought to give any, till his attention was again roused by a description of the Raby family, after whom he casually enquired.

“Squire Raby,” said my landlord, “lives at the great house at the other end of the lane, a good open-hearted gentleman as ever lived. Why sometimes of an evening, when he has no company, he will walk here and taste my tap. Miss Charlotte, that’s his daughter, sir, for there is never a young squire; my cousin Jenny is her waiting gentlewoman, and she no more minds giving her a gown that she has worn but a day or two, than I do drinking;

drinking your good health. Oh, she is so free and so merry, Jenny says, and if she ever quarrels with her, in a minute she is so good, and will give her any thing to make it up again. They keep a rare house; no locking of cellar doors, and whoever goes, why the roast beef stands ready, and they are welcome to the run of the knife.

All the gentry about visit Squire Raby, and Jenny says that they cut up more meat into outlandish dishes, that even the dogs wont eat, than all the folks in our parish can get. He loves jollity, good soul, blessings on his heart; his servants are rare friends to me.

“Miss is going to be married, if she is, poor Miss Williams will have a sad loss, for that’s the only place madam, her mamma, will let her go to.

“Adsbud, if the Squire ant coming ’cross our yard; fir, you’ll be glad of his company, for he is always pure merry.”

Nothing

Nothing could be more desirable than an acquaintance with the father of an intimate of Maria's.

He found the good humoured cit needed little introduction; they soon fell into chat, and Stanley informed Mr. Raby, that he came to reside a few weeks at a neighbouring market town, to enjoy the pleasure of shooting, a diversion of which he was very fond. The conversation then turned upon the quantity of game in the neighbourhood, and Stanley enumerated five counties, in which he had large manorial rights. He mentioned, quite by accident, the heads of a speech he had delivered in the house, relative to the game laws, and observed, that though it was over-ruled, most of the club at Brooks's were of his opinion.

Who could' resist desiring an acquaintance with a gentleman, who had estates in five counties; a member of the British senate, and of the club at Brooks's?

Mr.

Mr. Raby pressinglly invited him to dine the next day, and the invitation was readily accepted; they soon after took leave for the evening, mutually delighted with the interview.

Maria, on account of her friend's indisposition, was to spend the next day with her. Whatever with Mrs. Williams might entertain for her daughter's society, she always carefully concealed it, and even pressed her to gratify every inclination from which an innocent pleasure might be derived, and the more so, as she knew the slightest intimation from her, would make Maria abandon her purposes.

Miss Williams was that day unusually eager to see her Charlotte. The adventure of the preceeding evening was faithfully recounted; Miss Raby agreed that it was odd, uncommonly odd; declared she should not wonder if her friend had made a conquest; doubted not she would soon see the beau again, and
by

by this, in plain terms, expressing what had passed unmentioned through Maria's mind, she covered her fair friend with smiles and blushes. They were thus engaged, when Mr. Raby, who had been from home all the morning, entered the room, and introduced Mr. Stanley.

Maria's confusion at this unexpected meeting, at once explained to Charlotte, that this was the hero of the lane, and convinced her that her friend was deeply in love. The manners of the gentleman, indeed, seemed to justify her attachment; he was easy, elegant, and well informed. Maria, as soon as she a little recollected herself, could not but be pleased with observations, replete at once with wit and sense.

When retired to the dressing-room, Charlotte felicitated her upon her lover, of whose inviolable regard, several intelligent glances had convinced this penetrating young lady. So highly did she rate him, that she declared
he

he only wanted greater regularity of features, and the military air, to be as engaging as her Major.

Maria, in the expression of his countenance and style of conversation, traced an understanding superior to the idol of her friend, but wanted courage to assert the preference.

The gentlemen joined them at tea, and Stanley again displayed his brilliant powers. The conversation took a turn highly entertaining to Charlotte; the subject discussed, was the eccentricities of a lady with whom she was slightly acquainted at Bath, and who, though near her grand climacteric, was fond of being-addressed in the passionate style applicable to youth and beauty. He was recounting the ridiculous manner in which a gentleman, as antiquated as herself, had accosted her; and to embellish the narrative by corresponding action, sunk upon his knees to Maria, repeating the hyperbolical epithets, with which the old gallant honoured his charmer

charmer of three score. At this instant Mrs. Williams, drawn by motives of politeness, to enquire after Miss Raby's health, entered the room.

The gentleman hastily arose; Charlotte coloured with indignation; Maria turned pale, and fixed upon her mother her anxious inquiring eyes. Mr. Raby, the only unembarrassed person present, wished Mrs. Williams had come a little sooner, for that gentleman was the comicallest actor he had ever seen, and had made his sides ach with laughing.

In spite of this explanatory speech, and the encouraging smiles of Mrs. Williams, the vivacity of the party was entirely lost. The good lady, who felt concerned that her presence should interrupt the flow of merriment, soon terminated her visit. Maria, perceiving that her mother was going, rose also, and took leave in spite of the entreaties, and even the denunciatory frowns of her friend.

In

In their way home Mrs. Williams asked her daughter who this entertaining stranger was.

She answered with great frankness, that she knew no more than that his name was Stanley; she believed him to be a new acquaintance of the Raby's, as she had never heard them mention his name. She assured her mother, upon her honour, she had never seen him in her life, till he accidentally overtook her in the lane. Their conversation, she added, was merely common place civility, and her meeting him again to day, was entirely owing to chance.

Mrs. Williams smiled at this vindictory speech. "Spare your exculpations, my love," said she, "until I charge you with error or deceit. I am far from thinking you was guilty of an impropriety in politely answering a genteel address. It was very natural that Mr. Stanley, perceiving you alone, should escort you to your own door; it would even
have

have been a breach of that gallant sort of knight-errantry, which, as a gentleman, he owes to our sex, to have omitted it. I believe I answered him rather too coolly, when he addressed himself to me. From the unusual gravity of your looks, I was led to suspect that he had said somewhat impertinent, and am glad to perceive I was mistaken."

I must now reconduct my readers to the Raby's, who were much too fond of their new guest to suffer him to depart till a late hour. The hospitable citizen had some accounts to settle with his agent, but requested Stanley would take care of his daughter while he was gone, and partake of his bread and cheese in the evening. To say the truth, he was not without hopes, as he perceived Charlotte was exceedingly pleased with the stranger, that he might supplant the absent Pierpoint; and I need not add, that he had no innate dislike to a son in law who was a Parliament man, and had manors in five counties.

Charlotte

Charlotte thanked Mr. Stanley for his acquiescence with her father's entreaties, and declared it was a noble exertion of charity in him, as she was dying with a cold, and mortified to her very heart.

"Only think," said she, the moment her father withdrew, "was it not highly provoking in the old lady, to whisk her daughter away, and deprive us of the charming evening we should have had. Pray Mr. Stanley, don't you think my sweet Maria a fascinating girl?"

These questions were somewhat blunt, but delicacy was not Miss Raby's chief excellence.

Stanley prefaced his answer by a very melancholy sigh, and then burst into a profuse panegyric, closing his exordium with an enquiry, "if Mrs. Williams was not thought a very severe parent."

Charlotte, who never in her heart entertained a very warm affection for her friend's mother, whose good qualities, while they enforced esteem, inspired an awe that was not at all congenial to the turn of her mind, gave in reply a strong affirmation.

She declared, that as all the little pleasure the sweet girl was allowed to enjoy, was visiting her, she could not picture to herself a situation, more uncomfortable and confined, than Maria's must be, after her departure from Everdon.

"And can you then, madam," said Stanley, "associate the ideas of wretchedness and that charming creature, who is so exquisitely formed to give delight and happiness to every other heart? How can her cruel mother think to deprive the world of so bright an ornament, and to bury in oblivion a gem that would enrich a crown."

"Your

"Your sentiments," replied the enraptured Charlotte, "exactly coincide with mine. I constantly affirm, that if Mrs. Williams would but have suffered Maria to appear in public, she would long 'ere now have made a conquest, that would have fixed her in the exalted sphere of life, which her uncommon merit (for I assure you her heart and understanding are as excellent as her face is beautiful) entitles her to fill."

The gentleman answered with a tremulous voice, "that he had no reason to condemn a confinement, which had prevented this inestimable treasure from being placed beyond his reach." He took a turn or two across the room in great agitation, in order to consider how he should proceed. Convinced that Miss Raby had all the qualities he could wish for in a confidant, he resolved to employ her as such; then seating himself by her, he eagerly grasped her hand, and after protesting his admiration of her unshaken friendship, he conjured her to be secret, as more

than his own life depended upon what he was going to divulge. This the lady, whose curiosity was raised to the highest pitch, readily promised.

He proceeded to inform her, that his real situation in life far exceeded what his present appearance announced. An affair of honour, which he feared would terminate unhappily (here he faltered exceedingly, owing to some secret remorse) had compelled him to a temporary retirement, till he could collect evidence to attest his innocence.

Having got over the disagreeable part of his narrative, he proceeded with more volubility. His dislike of mercenary connexions, had induced him to form a plan for gaining the affections of the charming villager, without having recourse to the adventitious aid of fortune. He anticipated the pleasure she must feel, when she discovered that the man to whom she had given her heart, had rank
and

and splendor to reward her generous disinterested love.

Miss Raby was in ecstasies. She applauded a scheme so congenial to her taste, and when he took leave, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, she employed herself in looking over the news-papers, to discover what Duke (for she could not conceive the pretended Stanley was any thing inferior) had lately wounded his antagonist in a duel. Though unsuccessful in her search, yet finding in the Herald an account that the Duke of E—— was supposed to be gone to the continent, and that there was something mysterious in the reason of his departure, she immediately dubbed Stanley with this title, and at one bound, over-leaping every impediment, married him to Maria.

To the honour of Miss Raby be it spoken, that though she clearly anticipated all the superior splendor and dignity which her friend was to enjoy, she felt no secret reluctance to

the idea of yielding her precedence. She even intended always going to her Grace's routs, and schemed the dresses she would wear on these occasions.

C H A P. XVI.

ALL the night Miss Raby thought of her promise to Stanley, and resolved it should be sacred; but with its sombre shades, her resolution gradually withdrew.

“Where was the harm of telling it to Maria?” she knew her friend was already deeply in love, and she knew she could trust her own life to her fidelity. Would she then
betray

betray this amiable nobleman, who was already master of her heart?

Impatient to behold the glow of rapture which this news would throw upon her friend's cheek, forgetting her cold, and not intimidated by a very thick fog, she set off for Mrs. Williams's, without even having patience to wait for the chariot.

She found her friend in the garden. Alarmed for her health, Maria entreated her to walk in, but it was impossible to persuade her to stir, till she had recapitulated every syllable of what Stanley had imparted, and to this she added her own discoveries.

With the deepest blush of virgin modesty, Miss Williams confessed she thought the gentleman uncommonly agreeable; but far from exulting in the splendid prospects which had so dazzled Charlotte, she expressed her unaffected wish that his situation had been more correspondent to her own, as his supposed

rank must tear her from a parent she so tenderly loved, and from a manner of life, to which she was now partial.

Miss Raby was provoked at her insensibility; but her indignation had no bounds, when she found Maria intended to acquaint her mother with the whole affair. She actually sobbed with vexation. It was in vain that she urged the folly and madness of such a disclosure. At length she told her, that whatever right she had to unfold to her parent her own secrets, she certainly had none to publish those of others.

"For you know," said she, "your mamma is constantly at Mrs. Herbert's, and I know very well amuses that superannuated old woman with every gossip's tale she can think of. And pray, if the lives of two noblemen should be sacrificed (for his grace said, more than himself were concerned in what he told me) what shall you then think of your scrupulous nicety?"

Maria

Maria was offended at a suggestion, which militated so strongly against the faithful honour of her mother, and affirmed, that nothing should deter her from practising the indispensable duty of referring to the parental sanction, every proposal of marriage she should receive.

"At least," said Miss Raby, "you may defer that reference 'till you actually receive the proposal. Recollect, what you heard from me was only told me in confidence, and do not brand my character in your mother's opinion, with levity, because my warm attachment for you has made me divulge what I ought to have concealed. You may, if you please, sacrifice the uncommon good fortune that now courts your acceptance, but my reputation ought to be sacred."

Maria hesitated: she tenderly loved Charlotte; it was impossible to tell Mrs. Williams, as she at first intended, without discovering a fault, which she knew the strict mo-

rality of her mother would consider very culpable. She gently cautioned Miss Raby to avoid bringing her into so distressing a dilemma in future, and then promised to wait 'till Mr. Stanley had formally disclosed his sentiments, before she discovered the affair to Mrs. Williams.

Friendship in affectionate bosoms, generally revives with redoubled tenderness, after a little interruption. My young ladies soon found, that they never loved each other with greater ardency, than after their little fracas. Maria lamented that her dear Charlotte's friendly eagerness had exposed her to the danger of increasing her cold, and prevailed upon her to come into the parlour, whilst she dispatched their foot-boy for the chariot.

I have not hitherto exhibited Mrs. Williams as a character replete with curiosity; but it happened this morning that she was unusually solicitous to know why Charlotte, whom she knew to be rigidly careful in every thing

thing relative to her own health, should, especially after her late confinement, come out in so unpleasant a morning. She questioned her daughter, after the young lady was gone, on the motive of this unexpected visit.

My heroine was very unskilful at the task of deception. A child might have discovered, by her faltering confusion, that there was somewhat she wished to conceal.

Mrs. Williams pitied the pain she gave to her native ingenuity. Some parents are apt, when they discover any thing like a secret, to exert their authority, and insist upon an immediate disclosure. Far otherwise, this amiable woman blamed herself for the dilemma to which she had reduced a mind, deeply impressed with the stamp of truth, and clasping her hand, affectionately said,

“ In future, Maria, when I distress you by any unseasonable enquiries, plead your wish not to answer. I know the goodness of your

H 5

heart

heart too well, to fear that it entertains a thought, in a moral sense, improper for me to know. I do not consider any little pleasurable plan you may form with your friend, in a dangerous light ; hitherto you have never abused my indulgence ; can I have a stronger proof that you never will ?”

Pained by praise, of which at this instant she felt unworthy, Maria threw herself into her mother's arms, and in the effusion of filial sensibility, was going to make a full confession, but she restrained herself by recollecting the charge of Charlotte. Distressed between her mother and her friend, she attempted to reconcile these jarring duties, by resolving only to wait for the formal discovery of Mr. Stanley's passion, to avow every sentiment of her heart.

As Miss Raby's morning expedition really increased her indisposition, Maria's daily attendance at the Manor again became necessary. When she found that Stanley, profiting by

by Mr. Raby's general and pressing invitations, was constantly there, she attempted to excuse herself from the frequency of her visits. But as her friend was loud in her complaints, at the glaring unkindness of deserting her in an illness, which she entirely placed to her account, she was forced to go. It was not from a desire of playing with the anxiety of love, but from that amiable modesty of manners, not obvious, not obtrusive, but retired, the more desirable, that like our grandmother eve, in her state of innocence, she turned from the addresses of Stanley, and avoided, with the utmost caution, the opportunities which Charlotte afforded, of private conversation.

But it was not possible for her long to elude the vigilance of artful adroitness, seconded in its designs by the mistaken kindness of a well meaning friend.

Mr. Stanley, with pleasure discovered, by the respectful distance of Maria's manner,

that Miss Raby had kept his secret exactly as he wished. Perfectly well read in the theory of love, he saw through the veil of delicacy, that he was by no means disliked by his village charmer. He determined therefore to avow his passion, and bitterly complained to Charlotte, that her cruel friend forbade him every opportunity of disclosing the sentiments he entertained.

The frank hearted girl pitied a situation she would have considered intolerable, and the next morning pretending resentment against Maria for some ill behaviour, referred her astonished friend to Mr. Stanley for an explanation, and hurrying out of the room, locked the door.

Maria, who instantaneously discovered the design, looked more silly than she had ever done in her life.

Stanley, well knowing that the first moment of resentment at the trick which had been
been

been played her, would not prove most favourable to his intentions, diverted her a few moments by general conversation, till he saw she had recovered her usual good humour. He then avowed his love in similar terms to what my readers must have met with in at least an hundred of my predecessors in the novel line; the terms being invariable, and reduced to plain language, are, "I love you, and if you don't pity me, I shall die."

But as all the Carolina's, Sophia's and Henrietta's, do not give exactly the same answer as Maria did, it may not be unnecessary to say, that with a great deal of timidity, she confusedly replied, "that she did not think herself authorised to answer an address, which had not received the approbation of her mother."

Stanley adored her for her high notions of parental authority, and declared, in his opinion, that a respectful deference to the wishes of a kind indulgent mother, added to all the blaze

of beauty a moral grace, that was quite irresistible. He assured her, that as these were his real sentiments, it was peculiarly distressing that some unfortunate, but at present insurmountable reasons, would prevent him for a little time, from declaring to Mrs. Williams his adoration of her angel child.

Maria assumed a more determined tone than before, and repeated her resolution never to encourage a lover, who could not plead the powerful recommendation of her mother's approval.

The lover, who had a few *aristocratic* notions, (I use that word to prove my knowledge of modern politics) seemed to think it impossible that Mrs. Williams should object, when acquainted with his rank and character.

Maria was going to proclaim her indifference to the advantages of wealth and consequence, but recollecting that this would betray her friend, contented herself with saying,
that

that her mother judged from principles very different from what influenced the generality of the world; and she begged Mr. Stanley would excuse her for repeating, that she had ever been accustomed to that veneration for her mother's sentiments, that 'till acquainted with them, she durst not disclose her own.

Stanley now acted the passionate lover; he lamented, sighed, gazed, swore it was impossible to abandon her; raved about sacrificing his own life to her scruples with indifference; then recollecting that a friend's safety was involved, he sat fixed in gloomy silence.

Maria, invincible to argument, was not proof to pity. She began to wish a method might be found, which would preserve her duty to her parent, without driving her lover to despair. She entreated him to be calm, and perceiving her entreaties unnoticed, burst into tears.

Stanley

Stanley started and fell at her feet. He declared the tears she shed, were like the grateful dews of heaven, which refreshed the thirsty soil.

“Charmer of my soul,” said he, “if you indeed can pity the most wretched of men, drive me not to madness; suffer me to breathe my love; at least permit me to see you; I will ask for no return; nay, if you prescribe silence, I will not even breathe my passion. I will write to a friend, without whose permission I dare not explain myself to your mother; but ’till I receive his answer, strive to forget the unfortunate disclosure of my love. Consider me but as your friend; bless me by your society, and for this your invaluable compliance, the gratitude of my future life—yet why talk of life, if forbidden to pass it with the idol of my enamoured heart?”

Maria, already softened, was vanquished by this passionate address. It seemed at that moment,

moment, not very improper to conceal it from Mrs. Williams for a week or too longer. The letter would in that time be answered, and that she resolved should be the utmost period of time, in which her actions should not exactly coincide with her duty.

Stanley received her acquiescence with rapture. But Maria silenced him by observing, that the grant was only made on condition of his promised forbearance from the subject of love. The artless girl fancied, in this injunction, she discovered an uncommon share of prudence; she was ignorant that the female heart, which is guarded by native modesty and delicacy, against the direct solicitations of a lover, easily surrenders to those thousand insinuating attentions and attractive allurements, which a designing man knows how to practise, in the moment of unguarded confidence.

C H A P. XVII.

EVERY difficulty which Maria's delicacy threw in the way, served but to increase her lover's attachment; who, now compleatly caught in his own toil, really felt the affection which he at first pretended. His confidence of success sensibly diminished, but his increasing esteem kept up the ardency of pursuit.

Charlotte, who could no longer plead illness, hourly contrived some fresh inducement to allure her friend to the Manor. One day was to be spent in a gipsy scheme in

in the woods; another morning was to be dedicated to fishing; another was appropriated to the visiting some handsome seat, or fine ruin in the neighbourhood.

Mrs. Williams was more ready to indulge her daughter in her friend's society, as the period of separation would shortly commence. She knew indeed that Stanley was frequently at the Manor, but her confidence in Maria was unshaken; and though many may blame her for a false security, I am forced to confess, that she never once questioned her servant, who was sent every evening to accompany her home, if there was any gentleman that day at Mr. Raby's.

During this time, Stanley's progress in Maria's heart was rapid. If in their morning excursions, the beauty of the scenes around them, or the wonderful productions of nature, were the subject of conversation, he treated them with the ease of a gentleman, and the perspicuity of a scholar. The awful
grandeur

grandeur of a ruined castle, or decaying Abbey, gave an opportunity of introducing, without pedantry, the exploits and studies of former times. On an evening he took care to render his knowledge of the fine arts conspicuous; sometimes he sketched a flower; at another time recited a fine passage from an approved author; and one evening, seating himself at Charlotte's harpsichord, he in a masterly manner accompanied the following song.

1.

Oh, nature! universal queen,
 Though mindless of thy power divine;
 I long have left thy bowers serene,
 Gay follies vagrant band to join;
 Who wander'd from thy simple fane,
 To follow phantoms false and vain.

2.

Behold, with pure devotion warm'd,
 Again the vagrant seeks thy grove;
 I trace thy winding rivulet charm'd,
 Entranc'd I hear thy linnets love;
 And as each touching charm I see,
 I challenge art to rival thee.

3. But

3.

But should'st thou ask what potent call
Has wak'd the latent sense of wrong,
And bade me at the altar fall,
Of her whom I neglected long ;
Truth shall compel my lips to own,
That love conducts me to thy throne.

4.

He blends with thine Maria's name,
Congenial charms in each I trace ;
She perfect as thy faultless frame,
Thou lovely as her angel face ;
Thy dictates pure her bosom warms,
Like thee she smiles, like thee she charms.

Mr. Raby, delighted with the performance, declared it was wonderfully pretty, and Charlotte's encomium was adorned with all the technical terms, that evinced her own scientific knowledge. But the plaudit which Stanley most valued, was Maria's, when she assumed courage sufficient to raise her blushing face from the embroidery, and rewarded his exertions with the smile which he had described.

Attentions

Attentions of this delicate kind were, to a young woman of Maria's sentimental way of thinking, infinitely more dangerous than the most passionate address. Every day she found, that her inclination to comply with Charlotte's invitation, grew more forcible; and her relish for the pleasures which her former occupations afforded, as insensibly declined.

An earlier frost than she expected, had killed some of her tenderest plants, which she had neglected to lodge in the green-house. She found some of her poor pensioners ungrateful, and many of her young scholars awkward and obstinate.

Mrs. Herbert, good woman as she was, tired her by continually dwelling on the merits of her son, whom she daily expected; and as to working and painting, that went on much the best at the Manor, where she had the assistance of Charlotte and Mr. Stanley.

The

The time in which the letter from that gentleman's friend was expected, had indeed fully elapsed; but she suggested many reasons that might have prevented an immediate reply. When she had allowed time for every excuse, she began to reflect, that though, if the answer had been favourable, her lover would have flown to communicate its contents with rapture; on the presumption of the contrary, he would be silent, and it then became her to act. This idea was painful, as it was connected with a separation, which she knew not how to support. Shame at acting in a manner contrary to her avowed resolutions, at last determined her to invite the trial, though she was far from even daring to guess the result.

The question being of two perplexing a nature for her to propose, she had recourse to Miss Raby, who cheerfully undertook the office.

Stanley

Stanley bitterly sighed before he gave an answer, at last confessed, that his friend had so strongly conjured him to secrecy, that he could not at present discover himself to Mrs. Williams ; he added, that he had great hopes the time of concealment would be but short, and earnestly begged Charlotte's mediation with her friend in his favour, as he protested death must instantly follow banishment from her presence.

My readers are already acquainted with Miss Raby's benevolent disposition, and will not doubt her solicitude to prevent such a dreadful catastrophe.

She was indeed too well convinced of her friend's attachment, and too much of an adept in the sophisms of love, to apprehend any danger of breaking off the connexion by a full disclosure of what Mr. Stanley had told.

Maria

Maria heard all that her friend urged, with silent attention, nor did she, when the fair pleader ceased, attempt a reply, and during the remainder of the evening, she was unusually thoughtful.

Stanley assiduously endeavoured to engage her in private, but she eluded his vigilance, and returned at an early hour to her mother.

On entering the parlour, she observed Mrs. Williams's eyes were filled with tears. An English history lay upon the table, and as it was opened at the period which treated of the melancholy catastrophe of Lady Jane Grey, Maria easily guessed the cause of her mother's sorrow.

"I have been thinking, my dear," said Mrs. Williams, "that a work very serviceable to young people might be formed, entitled the Morality of History. At an early period of life, the narrative works too strong-

ly on the fancy of most readers, to permit their judgment to develop the chain of preceding causes, which led to an interesting event; and besides, history is put into their hands, rather to store their memory, than to rectify their conduct, for they are taught to refer for moral improvement to fictitious compositions, and exhibitions of feigned incidents and non-existent characters. A narrative of real events might, I think, be very aptly substituted in their room. The same benefit may undoubtedly be derived from the former, informed by the spirit of truth, and recommended by the consideration, that the plain and unornamented story is not likely to mislead the judgment, or to inflame the passions. I will produce what I have just read, to elucidate my meaning.

You, my Maria, have often wept at the untimely end of that excellent and exalted lady. Too young to be charmed by the power, too studious and retired to love the pleasures annexed to royalty, it seems wonder-
ful

ful that ambition should rank her in the number of its victims. We are told that she cheerfully resigned the crown, which with reluctant tears she received, and with patient fortitude terminated her life upon the scaffold, while in the full glow of beauty and youth. Since the terrors of death did not discompose the heroism of her soul, what, we may ask, could have induced this admirable woman to a step which brought on her ruin, and which, at the instant, her conscience disapproved?—The persuasions of them she loved. Terror, my child, is only an instrument to subjugate mean and narrow minds; to a generous and exalted heart, the blandishments of entreaty and affection are infinitely more dangerous. Lady Jane Grey sacrificed her judgment and her life to oblige the parents whom she respected, and the husband whom she loved. She gave up the inoffensive way of life which her inclination taught her to pursue, and entered upon a road which she foresaw would lead to ruin. What an awful lesson does her lamented death convey,

to deter young people from carrying to too great an excess, that amiable compliance of temper, which when properly sustained by fortitude and principle, is their greatest charm. And how strongly does it warn them to doubt the propriety of those concessions, which are extorted by the entreaties of those they love."

Maria was alarmed at this unintentional description of her own situation, and eagerly resolved to quit the maze in which she had been fatally bewildered. She could not indeed instantly resolve to confess to her mother all that had passed, as she feared the impropriety of her conduct would forfeit that esteem which she justly considered to be inestimable; but she resolved that her future behaviour should justify herself to her own heart, and evince to others that she was not undeserving the esteem and affection of the best of friends.

Before

Before she retired to rest, she dispatched the following epistle to the Manor.

“ I must request you, my dear Charlotte, to inform Mr. Stanley, that whilst the circumstances he alludes to, continue to enjoin him secrecy, I shall persist in my resolution of declining his addresses.

“ As any further intercourse between him and me, can only give pain, and increase expectations, which can never, I fear, be realized, you must, my Charlotte, forgive my absenting myself from your house, while Mr. Stanley continues his visits to your father. Do not press me on this subject; I ought not, I will not see or hear from him more. Suffer me then, unresisted, to act as duty dictates, and you will eternally oblige your faithful

MARIA WILLIAMS.”

When she had sealed this letter, she lay down in her bed, and experienced the truth

of that maxim, which asserts the pleasure that results from approving conscience. She found the tears which this sacrifice to virtue and duty cost, far preferable to the most agreeable reveries which a fertile imagination could form, when the passion that gave them birth, could not bear the penetrating glance of the God within the mind.

C H A P. XVIII.

I Shall follow Miss Williams's note to the Manor, where the astonished Charlotte, after eagerly perusing it, presented it to Mr. Stanley.

Verfed

Verfed in all the artifices of the blind god, Maria's letter gave him no alarm; it was evidently written by an unsteady hand, and appeared dictated by a resolution equally variable. He had ever, in his former amours, found little hazard of fuccefs, when poffeffed of his miftreffes heart; and of the fituation of Maria's, her looks, words, nay this letter left him no doubt. He affected, however, great gravity, and informed Mifs Raby, that fince his hated prefence deprived her of the fociety of an agreeable friend, he would inftantly leave the country.

Charlotte was pofitive that Maria never could have firmnefs fufficient to fupport the fevere refolve which fhe had adopted. She faid fo many arch things on her friend's attachment being far ftronger than fhe herfelf knew, that Stanley's gravity gradually relaxed, and he joined with Mifs Raby in laughing at the little love-lorn girl's attempt to walk upon heroical ftilts.

It was however agreed that he should leave the neighbourhood, and Miss Raby assured him, she would faithfully inform him what steps she took to plague Maria, and induce her to break her vow.

Stanley took leave of Everdon with little reluctance, as his self-love anticipated a speedy recall.

For three whole days after his departure, Charlotte resolved to torment Maria by silence and absence; but finding her friend's pertinacity proof against these punishments, she altered her mode of chastisement, and took a walk to Mrs. Williams's, not without expectation of finding Maria in the last stage of a consumption.

My cousin, Mrs. Primrose, was not more happy in premeditating the manner of a grand attack, than Miss Raby. Her plan was a little disconcerted, when she found Maria composedly at work, looking indeed a little graver

graver and paler than usual, but without either swollen eyes or torn hair.

Charlotte began by chiding her for staying from the Manor. Her absence, she said, was more unkind, as by her last letter from Ireland, where Major Pierpoint had been some time on a visit to his friends, she might very speedily expect his return.

Maria answered in a very tremulous voice, that she knew the reason of her absence but too well.

"Indeed," replied Charlotte, "I cannot guess; if you mean on Mr. Stanley's account, you may come with the greatest security. Immediately on my shewing him your letter, he ordered his horses, hurried back to his lodgings, and in less than two hours left this part of the world, with a resolution to visit it no more."

It was however agreed that he should leave the neighbourhood, and Miss Raby assured him, she would faithfully inform him what steps she took to plague Maria, and induce her to break her vow.

Stanley took leave of Everdon with little reluctance, as his self-love anticipated a speedy recall.

For three whole days after his departure, Charlotte resolved to torment Maria by silence and absence; but finding her friend's pertinacity proof against these punishments, she altered her mode of chastisement, and took a walk to Mrs. Williams's, not without expectation of finding Maria in the last stage of a consumption.

My cousin, Mrs. Primrose, was not more happy in premeditating the manner of a grand attack, than Miss Raby. Her plan was a little disconcerted, when she found Maria composedly at work, looking indeed a little
graver

graver and paler than usual, but without either swollen eyes or torn hair.

Charlotte began by chiding her for staying from the Manor. Her absence, she said, was more unkind, as by her last letter from Ireland, where Major Pierpoint had been some time on a visit to his friends, she might very speedily expect his return.

Maria answered in a very tremulous voice, that she knew the reason of her absence but too well.

"Indeed," replied Charlotte, "I cannot guess; if you mean on Mr. Stanley's account, you may come with the greatest security. Immediately on my shewing him your letter, he ordered his horses, hurried back to his lodgings, and in less than two hours left this part of the world, with a resolution to visit it no more."

Maria, in a still fainter accent, "declared she was glad that he was gone."

"If you are not forry," said Charlotte, "to lose, through a scrupulous whim, an offer of such consequence, no one else need; and I feel perfectly satisfied at the part which I took, when I recollect that there was too much indifference on both sides to promise a happy termination."

Maria repeated the word, indifference!

"Certainly indifference," resumed Miss Raby, "would any one have acted as you have done by a man they cared one straw for. But pray don't distress yourself by thinking of the poor gentleman's sufferings. I assure you, when he had read your letter, he turned upon his heel with an air of charming negligence, and smiling said, that it should be as you pleased."

"It

"It is at least," said Maria, "fortunate for me, that I have discovered his perfidy. To know he is unworthy, will restore my peace of mind. Indeed Charlotte I now hate him," and she confirmed this protestation by bursting into tears.

Her friend, who really tenderly loved her, needed no stronger proof of compunction, to induce her to retract. She soothed Maria with the most affectionate epithets, assured her that she only misrepresented Stanley's behaviour; to try her regard; and then gave an account, as much exaggerated, of the concern, despair, and unalterable attachment of the lover.

Maria was exceedingly vexed with herself, for having been so easily made a dupe, and coldly answered, "that while Mr. Stanley persisted in a mode of addressing her which she disapproved, his regard could only be a source of wretchedness."

Tired of this game at cross purposes, Miss Raby changed the conversation to her own views of happiness, which only waited for a confirmation till the Major's return.

My young readers know too well what happiness means, for me to particularize, the dresses, invitations, balls, routes, and fetes that floated in the imagination of the intended bride.

Maria seemed dull, listless, and uninterested. Charlotte attributed this to the contrast of situation, and found that her pity for her friend overcome the censure she could not but throw upon her conduct.

Indeed my heroine's heart did sustain a painful conflict. She was repeatedly forced to recall her mother's precepts, and to enforce her staggering resolution, by the shame annexed to breach of promise.

In

In the evening she found herself much indisposed; a violent head-ach, added to an uneasy mind, effectually forbade sleep. After a miserable and restless night, she perceived in the morning every symptom of an alarming fever. Still inclined to refer her illness to the foolish partiality which she was resolved to combat, she arose at her accustomed hour, and met her mother in the parlour. But the effort was too violent; she had just power to articulate the morning salutation, when she sunk into her chair. Mrs. Williams springing forward, prevented her from falling, and Maria fainted in her arms.

The consternation which this incident caused in Mrs Williams's family, was much increased by the arrival of Miss Raby, whom uneasiness on her Maria's account, had drawn from her bed at an hour unusually early. Terrified at the sight of the dear girl, thus lifeless, falling a sacrifice, as she thought, to unnecessary nicety, she filled the room with shrieks, tore her hair, flung herself on the floor,

floor, and greatly aggravated the general distress and confusion.

Mrs. Williams, mean while, was busily employed in administering every restorative which her recollection could suggest. We cannot suppose her less interested in the life of a child, on whom her every hope, her every wish relied; but habitual suffering had taught her habitual fortitude, and given her, on the most trying occasions, calmness and self command. A happy temper this, and productive of pleasures, which those who are so unfortunate as to suffer their feelings to incapacitate them for the duty of assisting distress, can never know.

Maria at length opened her eyes, and rewarded her mother by a look full of gratitude and love. At this instant Dr. Lewson arrived; he felt her pulse, declared great indication of fever, hinted danger, and enjoined the greatest quietness and composure in the treatment.

treatment of his patient. Happily Mrs. Williams was able to attend to these directions.

But no injunctions, no entreaties, could restrain Charlotte; not that she would really have risked her friend's life for the world, but piquing herself upon her knowledge of the real cause of her illness, she despised the power of medicine, and trusted to Stanley's return, as the grand restorative.

At every unobserved moment that she could seize, she assured Maria, that a few hours would bring him back, with all the ardour of tender love; but perceiving Maria only gave wild incoherent answers, and that Mrs. Williams took post at her daughter's bedside, resolved to see the punctual execution of the physician's orders, she returned to the Manor, execrating the folly and conceit-
edness of the sons of Esculapius, and convinced that her friend did but droop like Clytica, from the absence of Apollo.

A messenger

A messenger was immediately dispatched for Stanley; the necessity of whose speedy return, was stated in the following epistle.

Dear Sir,

Excuse my incoherent style—my heart is ready to break. Oh! my poor friend—she will die—her barbarous protestations will actually be her death. She bore your absence at first with great fortitude, but alas, it only preyed the deeper on her heart! Dr. Lewison says her fever is very alarming. For heaven's sake return with all speed. If I lose her, I shall never rest more.

CHARLOTTE RABY.

Stanley perused this letter with great agitation. His agony, at the idea of Maria's danger, convinced him, that the passion he admitted as an amusement, was become the tenacious possessor of his heart. He became a little calmer, on giving it a second reading;

ing; he knew Charlotte's disposition was inclined to the marvellous, and thought it more than probable that she had aggravated the alarm. The only circumstance that now distressed him, was Dr. Lewson's mentioning a fever. He had known love appear in the various shapes of consumptions, hysterics, and head aches; fever was rather an unusual symptom. But whatever form the disease assumed, he doubted not the same method would effect a cure, and therefore flew on the wings of love and exultation, to bid the charmer live.

C H A P. XIX.

LOVE and exultation, though very speedy imaginary couriers, prove but wretched hacks, when fastened to a post chaise. In spite of all his effort, it was three days from the date of Charlotte's letter, before the life-giving lover arrived at Everdon.

The self-complacent certainty of success which inspired him during his journey, gave way to a few perturbed fears, when Miss Raby, instead of flying to meet him, received him with a grave composed look. He eagerly asked after Maria.

“ I have

"I have just left her," replied Charlotte, "her recollection is restored, her fever abated, and I was so happy as to hear Dr. Lewson say, that her disorder had taken a most favourable turn since the irruption."

"The irruption, madam!"

"Oh, yes, sir, soon after I wrote, we discovered that the dear girl had caught the measles."

Stanley was mortified; he coloured, bit his lip, and struggled to conceal his vexation.

Charlotte kindly relieved him, by protesting, that though the measles might make her a little ill, it was her agitated mind that caused every symptom of danger.

Perceiving her opinion was not controverted, she offered to go down to Mrs. Williams, and tell Maria the welcome news of his return. To this he assented, and endured

ed, during her absence, all that distressing contrariety of misery, which a mind at variance with itself ever feels in the hour of disappointment.

Charlotte found her friend sitting up in bed, supported by pillows. Mrs. Williams, whose strength, anxiety and fatigue had been much exhausted, was prevailed on by Charlotte to retire, and she faithfully promised to stay with her friend, whilst her mother endeavoured to recruit her spirits by a walk in the garden. To this she added an assurance, that she would consider her weak state, and not attempt to harass her by conversation.

No sooner were they alone, than Charlotte bending gently over Maria's bed, softly whispered,

“ I would not distress you my best love, for the world ; pray don't be agitated, I have delightful news to tell you, Mr. Stanley is returned,

returned, and is distracted on account of your illness."

"Who informed him of my illness?" said Maria.

"I did; why do you shake your head? do you think I could bear the thought of your dying, without his even knowing you were in danger?"

She stopped, perceiving that Maria trembled violently, and recollecting her promise, not to disturb her by much conversation.

To speak two or three sentences in five minutes, could not imply a breach of that promise; and so small an exercise of the vocal powers, could not hurt even a dying woman. After a pause therefore of nearly that interval, she again asked Maria, "What answer she would send to Stanley's earnest prayers and wishes."

Maria

Maria closed her eyes for a few moments. She had recourse to the sal volatile she held in her hand, then seeming to have recovered her composure, replied,

“ To Mr. Stanley I have nothing to say, but those general declarations of good will, which philanthropy and politeness alike require. I could have wished, my Charlotte, that you would have foreborne this painful subject, at least during my present weak state. Be assured that the seriousness inspired by illness, and the recent marks of affection which I have received from the tender care of my adored mother, must render the resolution I made in the moment of health and vigour, inviolable.”

“ Have you determined then,” said Miss Raby, “ to give up Stanley for ever ?”

“ Spare me my dearest girl at present; spare that painful enquiry; I have determined
ed

ed to act as I ought; you know what that implies."

Unable to procure a more favourable answer, Miss Raby was obliged to deliver this to Stanley, who impatiently waited her return. He received it with that violence and disorder, which a bad heart must endure from tyrannic passions, in the moment of disappointment. Scarce could he command himself, to assume an air of politeness to Miss Raby at taking leave. He hastened from the Manor with greater precipitancy than he had lately arrived there, and flinging himself into the post-chaise, ordered the drivers to return with all possible expedition.

Change of place never yet cured either mental or bodily suffering. Stanley found, that wherever he flew, his thoughts remained fixed at Everdon. Some circumstances, which will in their proper place be developed, prevented him from visiting any of those places of public resort, where remorse can

sometimes drown its scorpions in dissipation or riotous excess.

He thought of going for some time to the continent, and to confirm himself in this intention, he endeavoured to ascribe Maria's conduct to levity, inconstancy, and coquetry. As often as he did this, truth disclaimed the ill-founded accusation, and placed the artless maid before his eyes in every charm of village simplicity and modest tenderness. He then cursed the pride which had robbed him of this treasure : for virtue and prudence are often branded with that hateful epithet, by people who are acquainted with them only by name.

Amongst the painful reflections which his supposed separation from Maria suggested, was that of a rival. No one, he thought, could see her without admiration, and a chance like his own, might throw some other in her way, who possibly might come recommended by that sanction which he had refused
to

to solicit. He felt so much horror at the thought, that his tour to the continent was renounced, and he returned to Everdon, determined to try the remaining chance, whether ambition might not render the mother's mind more flexible than love could make the daughter's.

Not judging that Charlotte was now likely to prove an able assistant, instead of going to Mr. Raby's, he stopped at Mrs. Williams's, and sent in a polite enquiry after the health of the family, with a wish to speak to Mrs. Williams upon some important business.

Maria was gone out an airing. Her mother, though too good a manager, and too well bred to be confused at the appearance of unexpected company, felt a little surprised at this visit. But when she recognized in Stanley, the person whom she had formerly seen at Mr. Raby's, and in the lane, several perplexing circumstances crowded into her mind, and led her to anticipate his motives.

Stanley made a number of apologies for his intrusion. He praised the neatness, elegance, and sweet situation of her cottage. Master of every form of graceful address, he felt uneasy, disconcerted, and anxious to avoid the penetrating composed look of Mrs. Williams, which seemed to search into every secret of his soul.

He mentioned Maria's illness with a deep sigh, which had the greater appearance of being affected, as he immediately after exulted in her recovery. He talked of beauty, intelligence, and sweetness of manner, with enthusiastic rapture, and blent with some degree of felicity her praises with those of her mother, beneath whose forming hand the lovely creature grew.

Mrs. Williams was mortified to find he thought so meanly of her, as to make flattery the vehicle of insinuation. She listened with a very grave aspect, and without affecting to deny the merit which he extolled, seemed
waiting

waiting to know whither this rhapsody would tend.

Extremely disappointed, Stanley was at last forced to own, that his visit was designed to request her permission to express his passion for Maria.

Mrs. Williams answered, that in an affair of such importance as the admission or rejection of a lover, she ever intended that Maria should act for herself. The only privilege she would assume was, that of giving such advice, as her longer experience in the world would enable her to afford. She added, that as in the present case she was an entire stranger, she must beg that he would favour her with a little information, that she might judge with what propriety her daughter could listen to his addresses.

Stanley replied, "that at present unhappily he could not fully explain."

Mrs. Williams was extremely sorry, "but thought till he could, it would be far better for Maria to remain ignorant of his intentions."

Stanley found his ingenuity again desert him; but at last he replied, "that he would place in her unlimited confidence, but enjoined the strictest secrecy, with all but her angel daughter."

He then informed her, that his real name was Henry Neville, and his rank a baronet. An unfortunate dispute with a friend, had necessitated him to use a temporary retirement, till evidence could be produced to clear his innocence. He added, that he loved Maria more than life, and if his rank and fortune could gain her, he should be the happiest of men.

Mrs. Williams was not one of those querulous beings, who hate affluence and quality, merely because of its name, and ever annex
to

to the idea of a superior in fortune, that of an inferior in virtue. In her former acquaintance with the world, she had frequently seen the most exalted sentiments and consistent conduct, added to the lustre of wealth and nobility. When I say therefore, that she was not in ecstasies at discovering Sir Henry Neville to be an admirer of her daughter; I must observe, that she fancied that she discovered somewhat in the manner of his address, that abated her rapture.

Appearing to refer his apparent agitation to the distress which he felt at the unfortunate issue of an affair of honour, she replied, "that she pitied him exceedingly. No reflection," said she, "can be so dreadful, as to know that we have deprived a fellow-creature of life. Even the consciousness of our having endeavoured to avoid the fatal conflict, can hardly support us; for though it abates our apprehension, that the final sentence will fall severely on ourselves, it must increase our

concern for our rash fellow-creature, who but for us might possibly have lived to repent."

Sir Henry Neville, " (I now drop the borrowed name of Stanley;) was much pleased with these sentiments, which he assured Mrs. Williams were so much in unison with his own; that it was to avoid the fatal consequences which he described, that he had retired from the world, till he could convince his rash and misguided friend of his innocence."

" Your conduct, sir," said Mrs. Williams, " is uncommonly heroical; but I must wonder that such a ferocious honour should exist, as can hunt a gentleman from society, and compel him to borrow a disguise, to escape from danger and from guilt."

" I cannot," replied Sir Henry, " fully explain my unhappy tale, yet such is my situation; nor can you, in this innocent retreat; form an idea of the depravity of
the

the world. My wish is to escape from it, and that wish is connected with the possession of Maria. Will you, madam, permit your lovely daughter to make me a thorough convert to retirement, and the peaceful virtues?"

"My artless girl," resumed Mrs. Williams, "is likely to make but an uninteresting companion to one who is intimately acquainted with the gayer scenes of life: and believe me, sir, however you may (from the pressure of present vexations) now seem disposed to turn with abhorrence from those pleasurable pursuits, in which you have been accustomed to engage, long confirmed habits will inevitably return; and I should conceive myself to be highly reprehensible, if I suffered you to form engagements, which would render that return painful."

"When you are better acquainted with my story, and my sentiments, madam," resumed Sir Henry, "you will not deny me the praise of energy and stability of character.

Till then you must permit me to plead the reference, which you say you are determined to make, and allow me to expect your Maria's decision."

Mrs. Williams could not deny her permission, and he took leave with an intimation, that he should wait on her again the next day.

C H A P. XX.

HE had not been long gone, before Maria, ignorant of all that had passed, returned. Mrs. Williams took the earliest opportunity of informing her of their visitor.

At

At the name of Stanley, a vivid blush spread over her languid cheek, and catching hold of her mother's arm, she eagerly exclaimed,

“Has he, my dearest mother, obtained your consent?”

A deep sigh burst from the maternal bosom, in which Maria endeavoured to hide her blushes. Convinced of the partiality which her child entertained, Mrs. Williams's presaging heart explored a thousand dangers. She however calmly replied,

“As your future wretchedness or happiness must depend upon your own conduct, it is highly fit, that in this instance, you should have the power of acting for yourself: I will advise you, but I will do no more. Yet if the tenderness which I have lavished on you, calls forth your affection, restrain that agonizing burst of tears; I know, my love, that it does—tell me then

all that has passed between you and your lover."

Never had Maria felt more happy than now, when permitted to disclose the secret which she had so long found painful and oppressive. The ingenuous manner in which she described her whole conduct; her artless confession of her error in concealment, and the unintentional effect which her mother's conversation had wrought upon her mind, all operated to procure a full and affectionate forgiveness.

"Yes, my Maria," resumed Mrs. Williams, "you are free; exercise the discretion and the judgment you possess; examine your inclinations, and try them by the test of reason. All that I request is, your confidence: suffer me to know how you act, and permit me to scrutinize your motives. Rest assured, that as I can have no interest but what is connected with your's, I can never be influenced by sinister designs. Fear not my

my severe censures, for love will blind me to your errors, even while I mourn their effects. Should you, which Providence forbid! meet only with disappointment, where you fix your fondest hopes, one asylum can never fail you, the bosom of your doating mother!"

Maria replied, "that whatever error she might fall into, she had too severely suffered from concealment, to repeat that fault; and she resolved in future, not only to entreat her mother's advice, but to regulate her conduct by it entirely; and should she even desire her to dismiss Sir Henry, she would immediately comply."

Mrs. Williams smiled to hear her daughter speak with firmness of a theory, which she feared, would in practice be found extremely difficult. She was too judicious, as well as too tender a parent, to exert such an authority. Sir Henry's conduct appeared to her artful and prevaricating, and served to increase every suspicion which she had formed,

respecting the merit of his character, and the nature of his designs. But there was evidently a veil before Maria's eyes, and to tear it away by force, might be productive of fatal consequences.

Parental opposition generally increases love : she doubted not Maria's dutiful acquiescence, but she feared that acquiescence would be attended by the silent consuming regret, which proceeds from the imputed excellence with which the imagination always adorns a prohibited object. She considered, that in being possessed of Maria's confidence, she had gained a material point, and that her advice would be more efficacious on any occasion, from her not appearing at the outset as the Baronet's enemy. Determined therefore to preserve the strictest moderation, she told Maria, that she would only lay down a few general rules, and leave her to draw such conclusions as she judged best.

“ Though,”

“ Though,” continued she, “ when a young woman accepts the addresses of a lover, she only seems to make a tacit acknowledgment, that on her general knowledge of his character and situation, she finds no objection, but wishes, by a more intimate acquaintance, to gain a just and definitive opinion. Yet the customs of the world seem unfavourable to the dissolving of the connexion on either side, unless for very substantial objections. The young woman who for little scruples, discards the lover she has encouraged, is seldom mentioned in a respectable light; and the heart that has been offered to numbers of our sex, is rarely thought to be worthy the acceptance of any. This implies the necessity of extreme care in the beginning of courtship. A prudent girl will consider as deeply, ’ere she admits a lover, as if she was actually contracting marriage. You must therefore, Maria, reflect on the little incidents to which you have been witness. Such reflection will give you an insight into Sir Henry’s character, and you may then consider

consider how these circumstances accord with your own sentiments on those essential points, which must be the foundation of your future happiness.

Maria, who in every recollection of her lover, could only see a magical image of perfect excellence, with great sincerity, answered,

“ That to her he seemed perfectly agreeable, and in all respects the person, whom, if she had the liberty of unbounded choice, she would to all others prefer.”

“ I have seen too little of him,” returned Mrs. Williams, “ to confirm or dispute your opinion; one thing however I must premise. I have ever had a strong objection to disproportionate marriages; and when I shall have informed you of some circumstances of my past life, you will not wonder at a dislike which reason and experience equally confirm. The esteem, confidence, and reciprocal acts of tenderness, which are the basis of conubial friendship,

friendship, are in some degree incompatible with the idea of weighty obligation on one side. In whose society do we unbend with pleasure; is it not in that of our equals, and does not then the strict society of wedlock call for equality? generosity and gratitude awkwardly perform those offices which are gracefully discharged by free and unconstrained tenderness. But if you think this sentiment too refined, tell me, is it not probable that people will discharge the duties of that state of life in which they are originally placed, with more propriety than of one to which they are accidentally raised? consider the force of education, connexion and habit. Our youthful pleasures, and the way of life in our early years, always, on retrospect, appear most agreeable. An uneducated rustic could by no means enter into those literary pursuits, in which you find such a fund of entertainment; nor can you form an idea of the satisfaction which a fine lady feels in a crowd of people whom she despises, or in
visiting

visiting those whom she hopes to find pre-engaged.

Those notions of oeconomy and retirement which I have instilled into your mind, would be improper for Lady Neville, who must encourage trade, and court popularity. Your native generosity and vivacity of temper will, I know, make you start from meanness and supercilious reserve ; but how great is the danger of their betraying you into an excess equally blameable ? I pass over the thousand little awkwardnesses, which, for want of an early acquaintance with the world, you will probably fall into ; for though the laugh they will raise against you, is very distressing, you will, I know, soon be able to accommodate your manners to the society of those with whom you converse. But I must mention to you a fear, that when novelty shall no longer endear you to your husband, he may cast his eyes on those numberless ladies of rank and fortune, who are equal to his expectations, and probably too, your superiors in external
graces

graces and accomplishments. I say, my dear, if from looking on them, he should throw an unavailing retrospect on his past conduct, and blame the rash preference which selected you for his wife, how, Maria, will you be able to conduct yourself in paths, which are to you new and intricate? can you be able to endure the fatigues and exertions necessary to your station, when the charm which endeared them to you is broken?"

"Oh my dear mother," resumed Maria, "if you knew Sir Henry Neville, you would not have drawn this terrifying picture. I cannot describe to you his fond attachment, his love for retirement, his anxiety to fly from a world, which he dislikes equally with yourself. I know he will permit me to live in the country, I shall then give up my time to the amusements of which I am so fond, as I shall only have the power of pursuing them on a larger scale. The poor shall bless my good fortune. I will fill my library with the most approved authors; we will taste in its
highest

highest degree the pleasures of the country, blended with those of science, and I shall have you, my dear mother, with me, to preserve me from every error."

Mrs. Williams thanked her daughter for her affectionate wish of retaining her society, and referred her answer on that head to some future period. She expressed great pleasure at hearing the young Baronet's sentiments were so similar to her own.

"But are you certain, Maria," said she, "that you have not built positive conclusions on general observations. When I consider the graceful person and easy elegance of Sir Henry, I am astonished to find that a young gentleman like him, should so soon be disgusted with society, to which he has always been habituated, and in which he is so capable of appearing with eclat. Many disappointments rendered it necessary for me to wean my mind from amusements, into which I did not enter, till I was past the age in which

which they take deep hold of the heart. I have endeavoured, not unsuccessfully, to render my desires as retired as my fortune. I wish that I was acquainted with the reasons of Sir Henry's disgust; I confess I think it will terminate like the quarrels of lovers, in a fonder reconciliation. If therefore, my dear, you aspire to the honour of his hand, I would advise you to give up your books and your garden, and apply your mind to the duties of the card table and the toilette."

Maria laughed at her mother's presentiment, and assured her she should never find a scientific knowledge of those things necessary; but to secure the enjoyment of the quiet which she loved, she resolved to make a general residence in the country a preliminary article in her intended engagement.

They now parted for the evening, to spend a sleepless night, which was employed by the mother in apprehensive fears and anxious prayers to Providence, to direct and preserve her

her unsuspecting child. Maria, during the same interval, gave way to the pleasing reveries of love and hope, which were sometimes diversified by the agreeable thought of the charming news which she should have to communicate to her dear Charlotte, on her return from town, whether she was just gone with her father that evening, to meet the Major, and prepare for her approaching marriage.

CHAP. XXI.

WHEN I recollect the practice of my predecessors, and call to mind the magical attractions which most female readers find

find in the words, silver muslin, gauze flounce, pale blue tiffany, delicate pink farsenet, embroidered fashes, white feathers, and wreaths of artificial flowers; I exceedingly blame myself for having so long delayed to ring changes upon those agreeable terms: and knowing that nothing will so happily prepare them for the important interview which I am going to describe, as a minute detail of the dress, in which Maria received the addresses of Sir Henry Neville, I resolved not to omit so fair an opportunity of gaining immortality. I therefore wrote to my niece Elizabeth, who is now an assistant to one of the principal new milliners in London, for a faithful account of all the paraphernalia necessary to be worn on such an occasion.

She was very punctual in her reply, and is so happily mistress of the appropriate terms, that in rather less than three sheets of double post paper, she briefly described the colour, form, and materials necessary to compose what she called, a genteel dishabille. I immediately

immediately began to transcribe it, but as my fingers do not move very alertly, and as I often stop to adjust my spectacles, stroke my cat, or take a pinch of snuff, I had not got half through my task, when I received a second letter, conjuring me to make no use of the first, as the fashion described in that was become obsolete, and Maria would appear in the greatest degree gothic, if dressed according to what was the ton three weeks ago. Compelled to an alteration, and vexed at my loss of time and paper, I had not made any great progress in my second transcript, when a third letter from Elizabeth, with yet more modern patterns, necessitated me to give up my project, and to confess that fashion is too much of a Proteus, to be sketched by so hobbling an artist.

I am therefore forced to be general, where I meant to be particular, and must observe that Maria's dress was very emblematic of her mind. It was studied with such happy care, that the result was always an equal mixture

ture of exact neatness and negligent simplicity. It was however sufficiently conformable to those prescribed rules of custom, by an attention to which, singularity is to be avoided; yet so well adapted to her own features and person, that it escaped the disgusting caricature which fashion charms from its professed admirers.

Sir Henry arrived, and Mrs. Williams unwilling to embarrass the lovers by her presence, after receiving his compliments, withdrew.

The Baronet flew to his mistress with the utmost transport, and Maria, with frank, yet modest smiles, expressed her pleasure at seeing him in the maternal mansion.

There is unfortunately a flatness in love scenes, which the most skilful artists can scarcely avoid. For this reason, I shall pass over this and several other interviews, as cursorily as possible.

Indeed,

Indeed, I do not feel myself thoroughly comfortable, whilst engaged with tender subjects. They bring to my mind too forcibly the kind things which were said to me forty years ago ; when I was young, handsome, and surrounded by admirers, whom I treated with the most rigid cruelty.

Sir Henry having full permission to visit Maria, took lodgings in the neighbourhood, that he might frequently avail himself of that liberty. In all these interviews, he exerted to the full those powers of persuasion and attraction which he so largely possessed. It was however observable, that his vivacity received an immediate check on Mrs. Williams's approach : a gloomy reserve, or confused hesitation, plainly spoke his dislike of her society, and in spite of Maria's endeavours to call him forth, and the placid cheerfulness and friendly attention which he received from her mother, his constraint seemed to increase in every subsequent meeting.

Maria ;

Maria loved her mother too tenderly, not to be concerned at the distaste, which it was evident her lover had conceived; nor could her ingenuous mind long conceal the uneasiness she felt. She questioned Sir Henry, why he did not seem at ease in her mother's society. At first he affected to treat the observation as the effect of prying penetration, which delights in imaginary perplexities; but finding his raillery did not conquer her conviction, he confessed that he felt an unaccountable dread of Mrs. Williams, and that he fancied she was ever on the watch for something to censure.

Maria vehemently vindicated her parent. She dwelt with peculiar emphasis on her good nature, candour, and complaisance.

"Those virtues," said Sir Henry, "I doubt not, but that she exerts towards those who fortunately gain her favour; but those, against whom she has adopted any prejudice, (amongst whom I unfortunately stand) I am

certain she regards with very different sentiments."

"Who," said Maria, warmly, "has injured you with this erroneous apprehension? I know that my mother is disposed to think favourably of you, and would you but endeavour to gain her good opinion, she would immediately reward the effort with her warmest esteem. Even now, little as she knows you, the principal objection which she starts, is, to your elevated rank. If you would promise to live chiefly in retirement, I am confident you would gain her cheerful consent."

Sir Henry was beyond measure transported at a hint which seemed to open an opportunity of disclosing the snare, in which he hoped to entrap unguarded innocence. He thought it, wise therefore, to abate his seeming apprehension, owned his mistake, and gallantly added, that love, intense and anxious as his, was apt to realize imaginary danger.

"When

"When I consider," said he, "the power which Mrs. Williams has over your heart, a power, of which I confess myself almost jealous, I cannot help picturing to myself how dangerous it would prove to my hopes, if lodged in the hands of an enemy."

Whenever a lover assumes an unusual degree of tenderness in his looks and expressions, I would advise my fair readers to be guarded. A kneeling posture, with the words, angel, idol of my fond heart, queen of my soul, and a variety of similar expressions, have often far worse consequences than all the imprecations and coarse epithets of Billingsgate.

Sir Henry, who was quite master of every degree of plausibility, after gazing on Maria in silence for a few moments, broke out into rapture at the enchanting preference which her wish to live with him in retirement, conveyed.

“And dost thou then,” said he, “my life, my love, dost thou then consider my society as affording thee more satisfaction than all the pleasures of my rank and fortune; than that circle of gaiety, of which thou wouldst shine the brightest ornament? Oh, Maria! this goodness suggests a hope, that my happiness may be nearer than I lately feared. If you can indeed be content with the confined joys of domestic life, suffer me directly to call you mine. An unlucky change in my affairs may speedily call me to the continent, and can I leave you behind? can I abandon you to the cruel chance which may perhaps separate us forever? Oh! give me a proof of your kind regard; despise the mercenary forms which bind narrow minds, and relieve my oppressed heart of its most painful woes, by consenting to a private union.”

“Not without my mother’s knowledge,” said Maria.

“Why

“ Why need your mother,” exclaimed he, “ be precisely informed of such a circumstance? when she permitted my visits here, she clearly proved that she had no objection to me as her son.”

“ I will never again,” said Maria, “ take any step without her concurrence. You must not, sir, look at me with such displeasure. I feel that it is my duty to place the most unbounded confidence in my parent, and I dare not act contrary to its suggestions. I will inform her, sir, of what you propose; nay, I will endeavour to obtain her consent. If she approves, I will confess, that for my own part I shall be happy in shewing my disinterested regard by any method, not inconsistent with prudence and virtue. Far from lamenting any temporary inconveniencies which I may suffer, I shall rejoice in the thought, that they will convince you, that my consent is not venal, nor my heart fickle.”

If Neville had proposed to Maria that she should for his sake have encountered a lion, there is no doubt but that the generous romantic girl would have supposed her strength equal to the combat. She had heard much of the misery annexed to clandestine connexions, but she thought it was easy to endure the sarcasms of a censorious world, the pain of jealousy, the suspense of absence, and the terror of discovery. Love, she fancied, would render these very supportable: when alas, it is from love that they derive their poignancy of anguish.

It often happens that the resolution which stands firm against distant evils, falls to the ground at the attack of a slight present inconvenience. Maria trembled at the thought of her mother's displeasure, and found, that the plan which in idea appeared feasible, was liable to many objections when told in express words. Nay, when she saw Mrs. Williams turn an eye of doubt upon her face, her mind experienced some very painful sensations

tions, and she abruptly concluded her relation.

The terrified mother listened with the most distressing apprehensions to her daughter's account, and with unspeakable anxiety asked, "if such a step was resolved upon."

Maria, with great confusion, answered, "that she would by no means consent without her knowledge and approbation."

"And is only that wanting to reconcile you to the variety of wretchedness entailed upon clandestine connexions?"

"I thought," said the trembling girl, "that some strong mark of attachment was claimed from me, in gratitude to Sir Henry's disinterested love. I wished to convince him that it was my esteem for his virtues, and not regard for his fortune, which influenced my prompt consent. And as I know you would never accede to a criminal act, I

thought your approbation would guard me from the reprehension of such an union. Its inconveniencies I was willing to endure."

Mrs. Williams's maternal fears tempted her to exclaim, "mistaken, unsuspicious creature, how does your fond heart worship virtues of its own creation;" but with an admirable caution she checked the struggling words, and turning aside, endeavoured with her handkerchief to conceal her emotion.

Maria perceived her mother's distress, and flung herself into her arms. "Thou dearest, best of parents, indeed I will be guided entirely by you. Never, never will I, by any act of disobedience, pain your feeling heart, or forfeit your regard. I cannot support the thought of afflicting you. Speak, tell me what to do. I am all duty and cheerful resignation."

Unable to reply, Mrs. Williams continued for some moments with her arms folded round

round Maria, and her head reclined upon her bosom. When a little recovered, she assured her that she entertained no doubt of the goodness of her intentions. "You know," said she, "where you are concerned, I am very apt to feel alarms and fears. When Sir Henry next comes, give me an opportunity of talking with him alone; I shall be easier when he has solved a few doubts which now perplex me."

Maria readily promised. She could have staked her life upon his faith, and felt certain, that a little conversation would remove every obstacle to mutual esteem and confidence.

C H A P. XXII.

MRS. Williams, who read in the mysterious conduct of the Baronet, every infernal scheme which his treacherous heart formed, armed herself for the interview, and resolved to meet, with coldness and complaisance, the intended seducer of her only child.

She was prompted to this painful self-command, by the danger of precipitancy. Maria's strongest, indeed her only guard, was her confidence and love to her parent. To hint
therefore

therefore her suspicions to Sir Henry, would be but to irritate him, and expose Maria to the advantages, which she knew he would take of a difference in opinion between them. She recollected that her daughter might easily be surprised when taking a walk; and dreading the mingled efforts of force and persuasion, thought it best to oppose art to art, till a convincing proof of his character had deprived him of his strongest auxiliary, Maria's heart.

When she found herself alone with him, she began, by telling him, that she had been informed of the honour he had done Maria, in offering her his hand, and entreated him to believe, that both she and her daughter felt very forcibly the intended obligation.

Neville, who by no means expected such a beginning, recovered from the alarm he felt at his approaching catechism, and replied, "that her consent, and the dear girl's, would make him the happiest of men."

“ Maria further informed me,” continued she, “ that it was your wish to have your nuptials privately solemnized. I agree with you perfectly, that it would be very comfortable to avoid the confusion and impertinence of a public celebration. But from what my girl said, I was led to fancy that you wished your union to be kept entirely secret from the world. I am certain that you could not form such a design, without having some very powerful reasons to suggest. I cannot but think she misunderstood you. Do you really, sir, wish to form a clandestine marriage ?”

A degree of severity in look and manner, which in spite of Mrs. Williams’s endeavours, stole into her countenance as she pronounced this speech, shook Neville to the soul, and rendered a brilliant harrangue on his unhappy situation, and passionate regard, exceedingly incoherent and confused.

Mrs.

Mrs. Williams expressed her surprise, that the pain of injured honour which he appeared so strongly to feel, would allow him to employ his thoughts or time, on any object but its vindication. "Your sorrow too," said she, "appears to me of that kind, as will rather be aggravated, than receive alleviation, from the too exquisite sympathy of an apprehensive, affectionate, and inexperienced wife. It seems wonderful that you should wish to cloud the morning of marriage by those excruciating cares, which must attend the preservation of life and reputation."

"You have just notions, madam," resumed Neville, "of love and honour, and therefore cannot but know, that both are equally jealous and offended by injurious suspicions."

"Certainly," replied the lady with quickness, "it may also be their characteristic to construe the well meant attentions, and friendly enquiries of simplicity, into an oblique affront,

affront, without considering that this violent irritability is calculated to create the doubts which it resents."

"I stand corrected, Madam," said Sir Henry, "but to remove, or if you please, to prevent your apprehensions, of giving Maria to a murderer or a villain, I have the pleasure to tell you, that the affair I first mentioned, will speedily come to an happy issue, nor will I, till it is concluded, receive your daughter's hand."

"There will then," said Mrs. Williams, "be no further need of secrecy."

"My father," answered the lover, with a sigh, "left his estates loaded with encumbrances, and my anxiety to support the splendor of our family, has prevented the diminution of them. It is to the estate of a maternal uncle, who is very rich, and has declared me his heir, that I look for relief. Unhappily his extreme avarice, and the pertinacity

tinacity of his age, will not allow me to avow my attachment to your daughter while he lives; but as he is very old and infirm, the concealment can be but for a short period. During that time I would support her in affluence, though not with all the splendor and opulence to which she would hereafter be entitled."

"Had you been so candid and explicit at our first interview," returned Mrs. Williams, "I should have considered myself bound in honour to have rejected addresses, which wanted the sanction of so near a relation, on whose kindness you so greatly depend. And even now it is not too late for you to retract them. Maria would, I am confident, feel hurt at the idea of stealing into a family surreptitiously; and her fear of discovery on your account, would be much increased by her unwillingness to give pain to your venerable friend in his last moments."

Sir

Sir Henry walked to the window to conceal the perturbed marks which pride, rage and disappointment engraved on his countenance. Mrs. Williams's disapprobation must, he perceived, prove fatal to his proposal of a private marriage, by which he had hoped to betray the ignorant and credulous Maria, to a fictitious celebration. As his difficulties increased, his resolution to surmount them grew more prevalent. To elude the mother's vigilance, seemed an harder task, than to escape the watchful guardian of the garden of the Hesperides: and to prevail on Maria to adopt any scheme without her knowledge, was alike impossible. It required the extinction of those sentiments of love and veneration, which seemed interwoven with every faculty of her soul. To surprise and force her from the parental mansion, was indeed possible; but how could this be done without exciting her terror and abhorrence? some method must however be adopted to gain time, but what that should be, it was difficult to determine.

Mrs.

Mrs. Williams misinterpreted Sir Henry's confusion. She was willing to hope it was the dawning of repentance, and fancied a little of her rhetoric might help the salutary conviction.

“Permit me,” said she, “to plead the cause of that family, of whose honour and splendor you have confessed yourself to be tenacious: and let me entreat you not to disgrace them by a conduct, that must be productive of sorrow and shame. Ladies, whose high birth merit your alliance, may, I doubt not, be found, who, to all Maria's good qualities, can unite the essential requisites which she must ever want; I mean rank and fortune. By such an alliance you will secure your uncle's bounty, and at the same time render it less necessary. We will never follow you with complaints of violated promises: my daughter's principles must prevent her from resenting a proceeding, which she will own to be right. To the claims of your family I could add that of your unborn posterity;

posterity ; and still more forcibly urge your future peace, which will be for ever murdered by a step, which, when the delusion of passion is removed, you will severely condemn.

Neville returned to this harangue no other answer, than that Maria was his choice, by which he would till death abide.

“ I will not presume,” continued Mrs. Williams, “ to dictate your line of conduct ; but I feel it inconsistent with my own notions of honour, to encourage your addressess, whilst you urge the necessity of mystery and concealment.”

“ If you are so determined,” said Neville, who just then thought of a happy plan, “ I will hazard all my hopes to convince you that I am sincere. I will go to my uncle, avow my love, implore his consent, and either obtain it, or renounce his intended bequest.”

“ If,

"If, after well weighing its inconveniences, you determine on this plan," said Mrs. Williams, "I shall urge nothing against it. Even rashness is preferable to fraud. But pray, sir, in what part of England does this gentleman reside?"

Sir Henry, who fancied that this inquiry would end in a request for a direction, and conscious that his uncle's houses stood in Utopia, replied, "that he generally spent his time in travelling, and seldom staid long in any place."

Mrs. Williams. "Indeed that restlessness of disposition is rather extraordinary, when we consider his age and infirmities."

Sir Henry a little embarrassed, answered, "that such a method of life was prescribed by his physicians."

Mrs. Williams. "His illness then must be of a different kind to those complaints
with

with which old people are generally troubled. Rest and peace, both of mind and body, are, you know, the cordials commonly required by age."

Sir Henry found so many inconveniencies attached to his uncle, that he thought it would be best to seem absent. Mrs. Williams therefore could not obtain any thing more during this interview, than a deep sigh or an exclamatory monosyllable.

Before she allowed her daughter a private interview with her lover, she deemed it prudent to fortify her mind against wrong impressions, by her account of the past conversation; which as it strictly corresponded with truth, I will not repeat.

Maria's heart throbbed at the recital, and when her mother finished, she asked her, "If she did not think Sir Henry's determination of applying to his uncle, an unanswerable proof of integrity and love."

"I will

“ I will tell you my sentiments,” said the good lady, “ when he has given us the result of his application.”

Soon after this conversation, news arrived of the return of the Raby's, with the intended bridegroom. Sir Henry, who had no great inclination to meet Pierpoint, and finding it necessary for the prosecution of his plan to leave Everdon, determined to be absent during the nuptials of the Major.

In the farewell interview with Maria, he bitterly lamented, that though he had evinced the strongest marks of generosity and confidence, he had found every avenue to her mother's heart so barred by suspicion, that he despaired of ever gaining her consent to his happiness.

“ My mother,” replied Maria, “ has a generous, exalted, and independant mind. These sentiments prompt her to behave with greater reserve and caution to you, than she would

would to a person merely my equal. She fears that the world may accuse her of having artfully made you the dupe of your attachment to me. Do but bring your uncle's consent, and all will be well."

"I have a scheme," said Sir Henry, "to engage him as it were by accident, to make you a visit. Your lovely face and enchanting sweetness, must plead more powerfully toward the attainment of my wishes, than any thing which I can urge. But, my Maria, can I be certain that your mother will not ruin all the happy effects which the sight of you would produce, by her severe and uncomplying philosophy. My uncle is not a man of literature, nor does he preserve the personal appearance of a gentleman. Even his presence would not, I fear, convince her, that all my intentions are pure as is the angel I love."

Maria was offended at his thinking so meanly of the candour and frankness of her beloved

beloved parent. "Alas," said he, "if I lose thee, life will no longer be an object worthy of my care. Dost thou then think a visit from my uncle will prevent Mrs. Williams from starting any fresh difficulties?"

Maria vehemently protested, that she was confident it would. Her agitated state of mind prevented her from recollecting, that the difficulties already started, originated from himself.

He sighed the word, adieu, and a thousand times repeated his protestations, that it was easy to resign affluence, pleasure, life, and even any thing but her.

Maria grieved that so severe a test of his affections was requisite, but doubted not, but that his love would meet the trial, and prove victorious.

JUST PUBLISHED,

In 2 Vols. 12mo.

BELLEVILLE LODGE,

A NOVEL,

IN TWO VOLUMES.

Let perjur'd slaves dull verse to flatt'ry fit,
And pow'r reward the prostituted wit;
The gen'rous bosom dares with scorn behold
Corruption's baseness tho' enshrin'd with gold:
Who, steel'd to ill, the cause of right defends,
Is snatch'd at once to gild corruption's ends.

20 JY 63

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR WILLIAM LANE,

AT THE

Minerva Press,

LEADENHALL-STREET.

THE
ADVANTAGES
OF
EDUCATION.
